MANZANAR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Oral History Project

NARRATOR:	Paul H. Kusuda (PHK)
INTERVIEWER:	Whitney Peterson (WP)
INTERVIEW NUMBER:	MANZ 1393A
INTERVIEW DATE:	July 28, 2013
TRANSCRIBER:	Audio Transcription Center

PREFERRED CITATION FORMAT:

Kusuda, Paul H., interview by Whitney Peterson, 2013, Manzanar Oral History Project Interview #1393A (transcript), Manzanar National Historic Site, National Park Service

NOTE TO READERS:

This transcript includes edits from the narrator's daughter Misao Kusuda (2018). Smaller edits are incorporated into the body of the transcript. Larger edits are footnoted. As a result, this is not a verbatim transcription of the audio or video interview.

INTERVIEW:

[Begin MANZ 1393A_1]

WP: Ok, it's July 28, 2013. This is Whitney Peterson from Manzanar National Historic Site, and we are talking with Paul Kusuda. Paul, do I have permission to record this interview, and add it to our library here at Manzanar?

PHK: Yes, you have my permission.

WP: Ok, great. So, why don't we get started? And could you just state your name for me, and spell it, please?

PHK: Ok, my name is Paul H. – middle initial – Kusuda. I use my middle initial because I want to let people know that I do have a middle name – a Japanese name. It is Haruo – H-A-R-U-O. However, I use as my usual name Paul H. Kusuda – K-U-S-U-D-A.

WP: And when were you born?

PHK: October 14, 1922, in Los Angeles, California.

WP: Were you born in a hospital?

PHK: Yes. I was the middle of three children, and I was the only one of the three who was in a hospital. My older brother and younger sister were born via midwife.

WP: And could you tell us your father's name?

PHK: His name was Masao – M-A-S-A-O.

WP: And when was he born?

PHK: He was born January 10, 1888.

WP: And where was he born?

PHK: In Saga – S-A-G-A – Japan.[1]

[1] MK: "I think the town is Saka and the province is Saga-ken."
Saga is located on the southernmost main island of Japan, Kyushu.

WP: And what about your mother's name?

PHK: My mother's name was Chiteko – C-H-I-T-E-K-O – Kusuda.

WP: And when was she born?

PHK: She was born February 18, 1899. So, she was 11 years younger than my father. She also was born in Saga-ken, Japan – S-A-G-A.

WP: And do you know about their life in Japan, and their parents' lives in Japan?

PHK: No. What I know about my father is that he was a younger son, probably around number six or number seven. And the two older brothers fulfilled the military obligations of the family. They were a samurai family, and the firstborn was expected to become an officer in the navy, and the second born was supposed to become an officer in the army. And then, subsequent boys were allowed to choose either the army or the navy. My father – he had graduated high school at age 18 – decided that he did not particularly care for the militaristic viewpoint of his government, and so he decided to immigrate to the United States. And, for that reason, he left.

WP: Did any of his siblings or other family members immigrate to the United States?

PHK: No, he was the only one that did, and the rest of his siblings remained in Japan. And I did not know the names of any one of them, nor did I ever correspond with any of them. My father did correspond once in a while, never talked with them on the telephone, and never returned to Japan.

WP: Do you know what his family felt about him leaving? Did he ever talk about that?

PHK: No, he did not. I guess they accepted the fact that, since the boys had fulfilled their military obligations, they had no ties to him. So, they just accepted his decision.

WP: And what about your mother's family in Japan? Can you tell me about them?

PHK: No, I have no information about my mother's side. I do know that she was an orphan, and so she was adopted by my grandmother, who immigrated to the United States, and then, later, asked her to come over. And she came to the United States when she was 13.

WP: Your mother did?

PHK: My mother came to the United States, emigrated when she was 13.

WP: And what brought your grandmother to the United States?

PHK: I don't even know her birth date. I do know she was born in Saga, as the rest of the family were, because I know she returned to Japan, let's see, about 1929.

WP: And this was your grandmother?

PHK: That's my grandmother. That's my mother's mother. Now, my grandfather and grandmother lived in Japan. I never met them. I don't even know their names.

WP: And where did your father settle when he came to the United States?

PHK: He finally settled in Los Angeles.

WP: And what did he do in Los Angeles?

PHK: Well, he and my mother bought a small hotel in Skid Row, Los Angeles, on Winston Street. That's the place where I was born. It is a small Skid Row hotel, upstairs, above a saloon and restaurant. And it catered mostly to the transient guests, although there were a few permanent residents. There were maybe two or three couples, and two or three single women. But most of the hotel guests were transient men who stayed, some for a long time, and some for a short time.

WP: And so, what did your father do before he met your mother, when he was in Los Angeles?

PHK: Well, he was running the hotel.

WP: Ok, so, he operated the hotel?

PHK: Yeah. He was the owner-operator.

WP: And how did he meet your mother?

PHK: I'm not sure how it happened, but the chances are he used a *bakashakunin*.[2]

WP: And can you explain that for me?

PHK: Yeah. And shall I spell it for you?

WP: Sure, that would be great.

PHK: Ok. B-A-K-A-S-H-A-K-U-N-I-N. And that is a marriage broker. And marriage brokers were generally around, at that time, to help men find wives.

WP: And so, that's how you think that your father and your mother met each other?

PHK: The chances are good that that's the way it happened, yes.

WP: And do you know when they were married?

PHK: July 14, 1917.

WP: And did your mother work in the hotel as well, after they were married?

PHK: Yes. She helped out quite a bit in the hotel.

WP: And can you tell me about each of your siblings, in order of when they were born?

PHK: Yeah. My brother was born June 1, 1917. Would that be right?

WP: And what's his name?

PHK: Bill H. *H* is for Hideo – H-I-D-E-O. And this was Bill, not William. My parents decided to name all three of their children with American first names and Japanese middle names, because they wanted their children to identify themselves as Americans, not as Japanese,

[2] We believe PHK was referring to a *baishakunin*. This term means matchmaker, marriage broker, or go between. MK suggested the term *kekkon buroka*, which means marriage broker.

but not to forget the fact they were of Japanese ancestry, which I thought was kind of an interesting way to go.

WP: Yeah, that is interesting.

PHK: But it also illustrated the fact that they identified themselves completely with the United States. So, my older brother was Bill H. Kusuda. And he was born in 1917 – June – and I was born in October of 1922. So, there's the gap of years between us, and I'll explain that later. And then, my sister was born October 6, 1924. So, there's two years between us. Her name is Helen Chiyoko – C-H-I-Y-O-K-O – Kusuda. And she later got married – Yamamoto – Y-A-M-A-M-O-T-O – and then, later, got divorced. She had three children, all three of whom are boys living in Los Angeles. My brother is deceased, and my sister is now living in assisted living in Los Angeles. Now, the reason for the gap in age between my older brother and me – about two years before I was born, there was a stillborn boy. And it was because of that, that my parents decided that I would be born in a hospital. And that hospital birth was successful, and so, when the third pregnancy came along, they decided to go back to the midwifery situation.

WP: Oh, interesting.

PHK: Yeah, so that's the reason why there is a big gap between my brother and me.

WP: And what kind of relationship did you have with your siblings growing up?

PHK: My brother, being older than I, had friends who were in a different age group. And he also, being the number-one son, got all the privileges. And my sister and I got the leavings. And so, all of our clothes, practically speaking, were hand me downs. He got all the privileges of being the first boy and the son, which meant that he got things that we did not get, primarily because our family scraped along. And we were able to make ends

meet, but then, just barely. And so, what they did was, tried to give my older brother everything possible. And that meant that the two of us younger siblings were not able to live as well as my brother did. It's kind of a strange situation, but in some families, this is the way it goes with the firstborn son. And it has to be the firstborn son. It's not the firstborn daughter. It's the firstborn son, who will carry the name along.

WP: Do you remember finding that difficult as a child?

PHK: Extremely difficult, yes. So, my sister and I were kind of left to our own. And the culture then was that parents did not over worry about what happened to their children if they were allowed to wander around outside. And so, when I was at the age of six, they allowed me to take my sister, who was four, four or five blocks away from where the hotel was to wander around the city streets, which we did, in an area which had penny arcades, movies, five-and-ten stores, and other places of interest to young children. So, taking my sister along with me, I wandered around the really unsavory streets of Downtown LA. And my parents were not worried about us. They had no fears about what people would do. Society was quite different from what it is right now. So, my sister and I had very good relationships between us. I felt very protective of her, and I continue to do so. And my brother treated us as younger siblings. We were taught to address my brother as *nisan*. *Nisan* is "brother" – "older brother," I guess. And my sister had to call me Haruo *nisan*, to distinguish me from my brother. So, we both called my older brother *nisan*. And then, my sister called me Haruo *nisan*. And then, I called my sister by her name, Chiyoko. So, we had a social gradation, which were carried over from Japanese culture. So there's a respect built in for the older sibling.

WP: Can you tell me a little bit about your mother and father, and about their personalities, or what they were like?

PHK: Yeah, my father was extremely hardworking, trustworthy, and very good to his children. My mother was also hardworking, trustworthy, faithful to my father, and was an excellent mother to the three of us. Both of them were very busy with their work, because when I was around seven, which would make it 1929, my father and mother decided to sell the hotel, and leave that Skid Row area for the west side of LA, because they felt that the educational opportunities in the west side LA, were much better than those in the area which we were living in, in the hotel. So, they were correct. The elementary, junior high, and high schools in the west side were excellent. So, both my brother and I graduated from Los Angeles High School. And their graduation rates were extremely high, as were their rates for college entrance. So, the schooling was good in the area that my father and mother chose to buy their small, family, neighborhood grocery store. They finally had to sell the store in 1938, because the competition with chain stores became overwhelming, and their capability to continue operating the neighborhood grocery store diminished considerably. Eventually, my father, instead of going through bankruptcy, decided to sell all of the produce and inventory that he had in the store, and then we had to move back to Skid Row, LA. And, instead of going bankrupt, what he did was, he paid off all his bills later on, after he was able to find work, after leaving his owner-operated business himself.

WP: And what did he do for a job when you moved back to the Skid Row area?

PHK: He found a job as a worker in a fruit-and-vegetable department of a large grocery store. And my mother found a job in a laundry. My father had a second job as a part-time,

nighttime clerk in a hotel. So, he worked as a fulltime grocery-store clerk, and a part-time night hotel clerk. And my mother was a fulltime laundry worker in a large laundry in the neighborhood.

WP: And can you describe the community near Skid Row for me, and what kind of people lived in that area?

PHK: They were transients and drunkards. Many were criminals. And there were also some fairly decent people who lived in our hotel. Even though I was four and five and six years of age, they were very nice to me. They talked about the kinds of jobs that they had, and I recollect a number of their experiences that they shared with me. I found it to be a very interesting experience, having grownups talk to me about what they did for their living, and what they hoped to be doing in the future.

WP: Can you tell me about maybe a couple of those people, that you remember speaking with?

PHK: Ok. One was working in the movies, and he was a grip. And I asked him, "What's a grip?" And it turns out that the grip is the one who moves a lot of the movie equipment around. And his ambition was to become the best boy. So I asked him, "What's a best boy?" And he said the best boy is the foreman of all the grips. And they have a better job. They get more money. And that was his ambition, to become a best boy. So, I found two terms that I had never heard before, and never heard of since. But I have seen both terms in the movie credits. And there continues to be grips, and there continues to be best boys. So, now I can understand what his ambition was. [Indiscernible] was one.

Another one worked in the sewers. And he had a miner's cap that he showed me, and it had some kind of a chemical in there that burned and served as a light on the cap that he wore on his head. And so, without using a flashlight, he was able to maneuver in the sewers that he worked. So, that was very interesting to me. He showed me his cap, and he lit the chemical in there. It burned very brightly. It was an extremely white light that came out, and did do a very good job of illumination. So, he told me about that.

Another one worked for the circus, and before they came in town they told me about the parade route that would be used in LA, as they marched the elephants and all of the equipment through the street to the area where the circus was going to be set up. And he was with the Barnum and Bailey group that had combined with another group, and it was Barnum and Bailey and Ringling Circus. So, I found out a little bit about his circus life, too. That also was very interesting. So, being at a very young age, I did get to talk with these men. And then, they were very nice to me, and explained all that. Then, there was a Swedish lady who had an accent, and she used to do some baking of some cakes and cookies for my mother. She was a resident there, in the hotel. And she showed me some of the things that she was baking. And I don't know whether she was doing it for an occupation, or whether she was just doing it for fun. But, at any rate, she was doing the baking using my mother's kitchen. And one of the things that she let me do was to taste her cake dough before she baked it. She said, "You can't eat too much of this, but you might taste it, just to see what it's like." And so, she allowed me to do that. She showed me how she had to frost the cake and all that, after she got it out of the oven. So, she was another one who showed me some stuff as well.

WP: Did it taste good?

PHK: Another man raised pigeons, and he used the roof of the hotel. My father allowed him to do that for setting up some coops. And would release pigeons, and they'd go someplace, but with a message. And then, he'd also get messages. I don't know what the messages were all about. But he showed me how he would throw the birds up in the air, and they would fly a little bit in a circle and then head off in the direction they were supposed to go. And then, he also showed me another cage where the pigeons would return. And so, I was up on the roof of our hotel, and watched him as he worked with his pigeons. So, right now, I think that most parents would never allow that kind of thing to happen. To begin with, of course, being on the flat roof of a hotel is kind of dumb.

WP: Well, it sounds like you had some really great experiences growing up in that hotel area, and were able to talk to a lot of diverse people with different backgrounds.

PHK: Yeah, and the thing is that this was in the middle of Skid Row. So, it was very interesting that I was able to make contact with individuals who were different from the general area population. These were all working people who lived in the hotel.

WP: Were there other Japanese Americans who lived near you?

PHK: I didn't know any. We were about four blocks away from Little Tokyo, which was First Street. And my grandmother – my mother's mother – had this small grocery store on First Street for a while. And her clientele were all Japanese. And so, she spoke very little English. And her store was stocked with many goods that the Japanese families would want to purchase. Now, I did not know any Japanese family. My parents, of course, did, and they had some relatives who lived in nearby areas. But we did not know too many other Japanese families in the area. There must have been a number of Japanese families,

but they mostly lived not in the Skid Row area, but in an area called Boyle Heights. And that was an area which had many, many Japanese families.

WP: And can you describe the community that you moved to in West Los Angeles?

PHK: Yeah. The west side of Los Angeles did have some Japanese families whom we got to know. And that was near Hollywood, near Beverly Hills, so it was bound by housing of people in middle and upper-income levels. Some of the houses had maids, and people who kept their lawns. And so, there were some moneyed people living probably no more than a mile from where our house was. So, we were surrounded by middle-class families, and included in our area were small apartments as well. So, it was a mixed development. We did not have too many other ethnic groups living in the area. But they did come to the junior high school. And so, the junior high school area included areas frequently lived in by African Americans and Hispanics, and a few Native Americans. So, those were the kinds of people – non-whites – that I got to know in junior high. But in elementary school, most of the students were either Japanese American or whites, and it was predominately white. And among the whites were a number of Jewish families. So, I got to know Jews as well as the Japanese Americans – the *Nisei* population.[3] And, in fact, I think I may have acquired some parts of Jewish accent from my friends, which is kind of strange. But some of it, I guess, I must have carried on into my adulthood. But I think most of my accent, however, I believe is Midwest.

[3] Nisei is the term for the children of Japanese immigrants, originating from the Japanese language term for "second generation." In the American context, the term is generally understood to apply specifically to the American-born—and thus U.S. citizen—children of Japanese immigrants who arrived prior to the cessation of Japanese immigration to the U.S. under the dictates of the Immigration Act of 1924. The bulk of Nisei were thus children or young adults during World War II. "Nisei" also implies being raised in the U.S. and speaking English as a first language, with a separate term—Kibei Nisei or just Kibei—applied to those who were born in the U.S. but mostly raised or educated in Japan. "Nisei," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nisei/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

WP: And did you have a best friend or a group of friends that you hung out with a lot when you were growing up?

PHK: Yeah. My best friend was Donald McKenzie [phonetic]. And he lived probably about three quarters of a mile from us. And I used to go to his house quite often. His older brother, Robert McKenzie was one of my brother's friends. And, let's see, there were a number of other friends I had.

WP: And were these friends that you had when you moved to West Los Angeles? Or was it from before that?

PHK: So, this is from the west side. I had no real friends when we lived in Skid Row. I didn't have many contacts with young people at that time, because the area itself was unsavory, and I wasn't in the elementary school long enough. I started elementary school when I was four. My mother thought I was ready to go early, and so, I went to Amelia Street School. It's a public school in Downtown LA, where I was, at age four, an interpreter-translator for the elementary school. Miss Adams, a teacher, Miss Adams, was perplexed by the influx of Japanese American students who could not speak English. Their families did not react the way my parents did. My parents wanted us to be American, and so, they spoke as much English as they could, mixed in with Japanese. But then, with English, so that when I went to elementary school, I was bilingual to such an extent that I was able to help the elementary school teacher give instructions to other children, and then, also, interpret their remarks back to her. So, I was held back in kindergarten, and so I must have been in kindergarten for two years instead of one.

WP: And did you and your siblings learn Japanese very well then?

PHK: My parents wanted us to learn Japanese, so after we moved to the west side, we were enrolled in a Japanese school. My parents had to pony up the money to pay for it. And I went through the first three years of Japanese school and decided it was too much for me, because my friends were all able to go home and play after school. I had to go to the Japanese school for one hour after regular school, and then four hours on Saturday. And I thought that was a real infringement on my right as a student, and so, after finishing about three years of Japanese school, I quit. And then, when I was in about the sixth grade or so, my father insisted that I go back to Japanese school, because he wanted me to learn Japanese. And when I was able to finish a college education, he would be able to get me a job, because he had connections in Japan with a former classmate. He would be able to get me a job in Japan, and my future, then, would be assured, insofar as he was concerned. And so, I reluctantly agreed that I would go back. And my first year of work was done very quickly, because I had already done three years. So, the first year went real fast. The second year took me a little longer. The third year was harder, and it was very difficult, because the fellow students were probably a foot shorter than I, since they were much younger. And they were doing much better than I in Japanese, and I got enough of it. And so, I quit again at the end of the third year of Japanese. So, I've quit twice in that third grade, and this time my parents stopped insisting. They decided that I must be able to figure out the need for Japanese language, and so they gave up on me. So, I know that little in Japanese, which means that I'm illiterate. I really can speak a little. I cannot read or write Japanese, except, of course, the very simple – I've kind of found out *hiragana*, but then, when it came to the ideographs, I'm completely lost.[4] So, my use of Japanese is, at best, less than minimal.

[4] *Hiragana* is one component of the Japanese writing system, along with *katakana* and *kanji.* It is a phonetic

WP: So, did you grow up in the household mostly speaking English, or was it a mixture of also Japanese?

PHK: It was generally a mixture – mostly English, and some Japanese. With my grandmother, it was completely Japanese, because she spoke very little English.

WP: And how did your parents learn English? Did they go to a school to do that, or were they self-taught?

PHK: My father graduated high school in Japan, and he learned English there – but, of course, English with a Japanese accent. And then, my mother got through most of grammar school, so she probably got a sixth grade education in LA, and then she stopped. Because she came when she was 13, and so she got up to about the sixth grade and then she quit, because, of course, she would be among the older students. And so, because of that, she was able to speak English, but not as well as my father. So, my mother's use of English was curtailed quite a bit, and not as extensive as my father. So, most of my father's work in the grocery store, with contact with wholesalers and with customers, was easy for him. It was more difficult for my mother to talk with the customers, but she was able to communicate.

WP: Did you ever find it difficult to communicate with your parents?

PHK: With my parents? No, I did not, but my sister did, because she was more rebellious than she should have been. And my brother, generally, was concerned with himself and not with anybody else. And so, he did not have a good relationship with my parents. In fact, he was going to stop going to high school when he was in the eleventh grade, and my father insisted that he had to graduate. So, he did graduate, in 1938, and I graduated in

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lettering system. The word *hiragana* literally means "ordinary" or "simple" kana ("simple" originally as contrasted with kanji).

1940. So, even though there were a little more than four years of age difference, there's only two years of graduation year difference between the two of us. My sister, being rebellious, did not complete her going to Los Angeles High School as my brother and I did. Instead, she moved and became a schoolgirl, working in homes, when she was probably, maybe a sophomore or junior in high school.[5] She moved away from home to become a schoolgirl. So, she went to spend some time at Hollywood High School, at Fairfax High School, and then, when we were evacuated, she was in the twelfth grade. And so, she was one of the first graduates of Manzanar High School. So, she was in the first graduation class from Manzanar High School, which meant that she graduated in 1942.

WP: Did you have any jobs while you were in high school?

PHK: Yes, in high school I worked for Three Star Produce as a fruit and vegetable clerk. I worked weekends, which meant Saturdays and Sundays whenever jobs were available, and as a fill-in worker. So, I filled in when people were off, or did not report for work, at the Three Star Produce. Now, Three Star Produce was the fruit and vegetable company that placed workers in various large markets. My father was a regular worker in a large market, under Three Star, and he therefore was responsible for the fruit and vegetable section within a Vons Market. And because of that, then I was able to find a job with Three Star Produce. But, since I was not a regular, I had to go to what was called the "meat market." It was in the wholesale area of LA. And those of us who wanted part-time jobs for the day only would stand around, and we'd register to indicate how many hours we wanted to work. And then, we would be called by name as openings were notified, to

[5] School girls or school boys were young people who took jobs as domestics with the condition that they would be able to attend school.

the company, at the site in the wholesale district. So, most Saturdays and Sundays, I'd go there early in the morning. And when I was fortunate, then I would be called, and got a job for 10 hours working time, and was paid $3 per day. So, on Saturdays and Sundays, when I was going to high school – and also in junior college later – I was working as jobs came up. So, some days I would work both Saturday and Sunday, and other days, it would be either Saturday or Sunday. Of course, before that, I had worked while I was in high school in different, other kinds of jobs, but not as well-paying as Three Star Produce.

WP: And so, you graduated in 1940, is what you said, right?

PHK: February 1940, yeah.

WP: And did you have any career aspirations at that point in time, or did you have a plan for what you wanted to do after high school?

PHK: Yes, I planned to become an engineer. And so, immediately after graduation, I enrolled at Los Angeles City College in their engineering program. Los Angeles City College is a two-year college connected with the California system, so that Los Angeles City College would provide the first two years, and then the person would transfer to other campuses. And my plan was to transfer to Cal Berkeley, and finish up my degree. So, my plan was to go into engineering, and I was following up on that through attendance at Los Angeles City College, and got two years in.

WP: What interested you about engineering?

PHK: Mostly the mathematics involved, and some of the drafting. I had taken classes in math through calculus in high school. And I had taken drafting, as well as typing, so that I would be able to get into engineering. I liked the idea of construction, and I was intrigued

by electrical engineering, having some of that in chemistry and physics. So, I thought that would be a good career plan for me.

WP: And can you tell me about your experiences at Los Angeles City College, and what it was like to go to school there?

PHK: My experiences there were real good. Some of my high school friends also were there. And I was able to escape bonehead English by passing an examination in English, and passing it to such an extent that I did not have to go through this elementary English class. I took a number of math related, engineer relating types of courses.

And one of the major experiences I found was taking an English class and joining a group called the Humanities Group that Dr. O.D. Richardson conducted. He was a professor of English. And the remarkable thing that he could do, which he showed me, was that he was able to speed read. And the way he read was, he would put his finger on the left-hand corner of the page, run it diagonally to the right-hand corner, and by doing that, he read the whole page. And his comprehension rate was excellent. So, he was able to flash through a book in practically no time. He was very much interested in intercultural relationships, and so, he had this group that he called the Humanities Group, and invited the *Nisei* population to join. And a number of us did go there, and thereby increased our relationship with the white population, coming from engineering and the arts and from the other sciences. And we all were able to have a good time together. And periodically we would meet at his house, and he had a son, and a foster daughter lived there with him. His wife was always called "Madame," for some reason or other. He referred to her as Madame, and we all called her Madame. She was a very gracious host. Their foster

daughter was Mildred Brundage. Brundage was the one who headed up the International Olympics Organization, and he did not have much time to spend with his family. And so, his daughter was living with the Richardsons.

Otis Dunbar Richardson, who came to be a great defendant of the *Nisei* population, and proponent for Americanism, which carried on after we got into Manzanar Relocation Center. He got a number of his other fellow professors to visit Manzanar as well. And they contributed a lot of materials from Los Angeles City College to help us start our summer school at Manzanar. So, our experiences at Los Angeles City College eventually excited him to such an extent that he really became a very active supporter of the residents at Manzanar.

I made a lot of friends at Los Angeles City College in the engineering department. And when Pearl Harbor occurred, and there was talk about the evacuation of all people of Japanese ancestry, I talked with a number of people about the fact that, in the United States, we were a country of laws, and that we had something called the US Constitution which meant that I could not be sent anyplace without due process of law. And I was confident that there would be no taint on my record. And so, I bet some of my friends – we had a friendly bet going on that I would not be evacuated. They thought that the social conditions in Los Angeles, and in California itself, were such that there would be a forced evacuation, especially after the presidential proclamation was made. Well, I never did have to pay off on my debt. In fact, my friends were worried about what might happen when we were sent to detention facilities. And so, what one of my friends told me was

that he was pretty sure that mails would be allowed. And that, in my return address, if I would put a circle after *H* instead of a dot, then that would indicate that I needed some help. And so, that was the secret sign that we would be using, but I never had to use that sign. But I was very glad that a friend thought that much about the possibilities that might happen.

And so, I had friends. One was a Hawaiian friend, Chinese ancestry – Henry Lum [phonetic] – who told me that, after certain areas of Los Angeles were evacuated and Japanese Americans were not allowed to go into that area, and since I lived in Downtown Los Angeles and would have to traverse areas that had been cleared, he would give me his button that showed the Chinese flag on one side and the American flag on the other. And he told me that I would be able to wear that button, and everyone would know that I was American rather than anything else. And a Filipino friend gave me a button that showed the Territory of Philippines flag and the United States flag on the button, and gave me the same message. Well, I used neither one of them.

And I did go into areas after they were evacuated, primarily because the main library was in that cleared-out area, and I wanted to go to the main library to continue using library facilities. And I had absolutely no problem, because, after all, most people couldn't tell whether I was – they could tell, of course, that I was Asian, but they could not tell whether I was Japanese American or Chinese American or whatever kind of Asian American other than Japanese American. And no one ever did bother me anyway. So, I had no problems at all. But what the whole thing is about is that my relationship with

friends in Los Angeles City College were of such a caliber that I had no problems. I was supported by my friends and by the faculty at Los Angeles City College.

The one that disappointed me the most was Richard McIntyre [phonetic], my professor in engineering, who wrote that letter, which was kind of a left-handed compliment, saying that I was probably not a danger to the country. But that was not the best kind of a letter I would have liked. The other letters that were sent, and I sent you copies, were much better. So, my relationships at Los Angeles City College were excellent, and they were very supportive, and I was glad to have the friends. And, unfortunately, I've lost touch with all of my friends in Los Angeles – both Los Angeles City College and high school – and I have no contact with any of them anymore, not only whites but also Japanese Americans.

WP: Can you tell me about December 7, 1941, and what you were doing that day, and what you remember about it?

PHK: Yeah. I was visiting friends. At that time, we were living in the slum area again, about two blocks from where my father's hotel used to be. And we were living in a large apartment house at the time. And I was visiting friends by Los Angeles High School, where I used to live. And we heard about Pearl Harbor. I was visiting with some *Nisei* friends there. And we heard about Pearl Harbor. I guess you would say that we were aghast. We never thought that Japan would ever attack the United States, and we were very shocked that Pearl Harbor occurred. I took a streetcar and went home. And both my parents happened to be home, because it was Sunday. And I guess all of us were surprised, and we wondered what would happen to the Japanese Americans and the

Japanese in the United States when the full realization of what happened at Pearl Harbor came about. At the time, on Sunday, there was no disturbances that we knew about. And so, there was no real fear that anything would happen.

By Monday, however, we had heard that some *Issei* men had been picked up the night before, which would be Sunday night – this was Monday – the night before, by FBI agents and hustled off to unknown local lockups.[6] This did not happen to my father or mother, but it did happen to some people that we didn't know. And later on, we found out that the FBI had made a major pickup of potential, suspected, possible saboteurs of Japanese ancestry; and this was all based upon information as to contacts these people had with Japan, the kind of occupation in which they were engaged, whether they were sending money to Japan, had accounts in a Japanese banks, were people like teachers of Japanese or Japanese culture. And the FBI director had made sure that apprehensions were made as quickly as possible. And, in so doing, they did not disclose why people were picked up, where they were going to be sent, and what they could take with them. In fact, most of the men were not able to take much with them except what they were wearing. And I do not believe that women were sent anywhere, but I do not know whether that's true or not. But I do know that men were picked up in droves. And the families were left with no information about where their men were sent, or how long they would be taken away from them.

WP: And how did you feel when you learned that that had happened?

[6] Issei is the term for Japanese immigrants originating from the Japanese language term for "first generation." In the American context, the term is generally understood to apply to those who migrated prior to the cessation of Japanese immigration to the U.S. under the dictates of the Immigration Act of 1924, the bulk arriving after 1885. The vast majority of Issei were thus middle-aged or older during World War II. "Issei," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Issei (accessed Apr 21 2022).

PHK: I thought it was unfortunate that information was really not given to anybody as to where the location would be, and the quickness with which this happened. I did not believe that the people who were seized would be dangerous in any fashion, because I was naïve. I did not think that people would do anything against the government. And I felt that this type of roundup was unfortunate. But, at the same time, I knew that the people who were picked up were not citizens. They were aliens. And, of course, at the time, all Japanese aliens were not allowed to become naturalized American citizens. I knew that because both my parents wanted to become American citizens, but they could not, because they had come from Japan.[7] So, I knew that the roundup was of aliens, but, it seemed to me, quick and dirty. So, that was my attitude.

WP: And what was it like for you to go to class after Pearl Harbor had happened? Was it different?

PHK: Not at all. I took the streetcars from Central Los Angeles out to Los Angeles City College. It's about a half-hour to 45-minute ride. And I had no problem on the streetcars. And classes went on as usual. We had a short time of interruption because there was some concern about Pearl Harbor. But once we got back onto regular scheduling, there was no problem. And no one made any untoward remarks, as far as I know, against the Japanese Americans. We were treated the same as we were previously. So, there was no difference there.

[7] A 1922 US Supreme Court decision (Ozawa v. US) ruled that because people of Japanese Ancestry were neither white nor of African descent – the two groups specifically mentioned as being allowed to be US citizens in the US Constitution – they were ineligible to naturalize as US citizens. Their children were citizens by birth. This would continue until 1952 and the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act.

WP: And I know you mentioned earlier that you had gone into restricted areas, or areas you weren't supposed to go in. But did you or any of your family ever have issues because of those restrictions or curfews that were placed?

PHK: Well, curfews applied to everybody. We felt no problem with reference to the restrictions. We did not feel that they were enforceable anyway, because, as I said, we didn't believe that people could differentiate among Asian populations, just as we would have difficulty telling who was Japanese ancestry versus who was Chinese ancestry. So, we had no problems there.

WP: Do you think your parents had a different reaction because they had family in Japan, and had come from Japan? Do you think they had mixed emotions about this attack, or did they talk to you about how they were feeling after that?

PHK: No, all they had was a concern about their families in Japan. My mother was especially worried about her step mother, who was living in Saga. But I don't think they were ever able to find out about what was going on with their families in Japan. And so, there was not much to worry about, because there was nothing they could do. They could not even get any information. So, that was about the size of it.

WP: When did you learn that you were going to be excluded from the West Coast?

PHK: I guess when the notices went out.[8]

WP: Yeah, how did you learn about it?

PHK: Well, before that, I knew that things were going to happen because, of course, we knew about the presidential proclamation.[9] But the first contact I had with the situation was that

[8] Notices with the title, "Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry" were posted throughout neighborhoods on telephone poles, etc. They included the logistical information for persons being removed from their homes.
[9] Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, authorized what was to become the mass forced removal and incarceration of all Japanese Americans on the West Coast. The order

Terminal Island had to be evacuated almost immediately.[10] I think they must have got, at the maximum, one-week notice, and probably fewer days than a week. And a call came out to people in Los Angeles that we need to give people in Terminal Island some help so they could move out of Terminal Island if they were forced to move out, and perhaps find some temporary lodgings with relatives and friends in Los Angeles and in the Los Angeles area. And so, I, with some friends, went on a truck to Terminal Island, and helped some of the families move their belongings to Boyle Heights. So, that was really my first contact with the situation, and the first time I saw how the non-notification affected families. And it was rather dreary, and I felt angry with the scavengers that came by and were taking advantage of these families who had to take up and move in a hurry.

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authorized the secretary of war and any military commander designated by him "to prescribe military areas…from which any or all persons may be excluded." The order does not mention Japanese Americans by name. As a result of this order, some 110,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were removed from the West Coast, most to inland concentration camps. Public Law 503, enacted a month later, allowed federal courts to enforce the military orders resulting from EO 9066. Brian Niiya. "Executive Order 9066," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Executive%20Order%209066/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

[10] Terminal Island was a Japanese fishing village in the Port of Los Angeles. After December 7, 1941, action against the Japanese Terminal Islanders was swift. The FBI initiated widespread arrest of Issei leaders and fishermen, and navy soldiers searched their homes for contraband like radios, cameras, pictures of Japan, even kitchen knives. Fishermen had the potential to contact enemy vessels with their long-distance sea-faring boats and shortwave radios according to the Justice Department and the Office of Naval Intelligence. The U.S. government presumed the Issei, who were aliens ineligible for citizenship by law, would be more closely aligned to their mother country than the nation of their residence. Terminal Islanders had the added handicap of being isolated and solidly Japanese while residing adjacent to a U.S. Navy shipyard where warships were under construction. Even before the presidential order, talk of confusing on-again off-again official pronouncements of eviction kept residents wondering about their immediate future. On February 25th they had their answer: navy personnel started posting notices mandating all Japanese Americans, both aliens and native-born U.S. citizens, off the island within 48 hours. With the camps still under construction, residents had to move to temporary quarters somewhere off the island in the interim. Women managed the difficult task of finding accommodations and relocating their families without their husbands, Issei men who were now in government custody. In their rush to leave their homes, most suffered massive losses of personal and business property as they unloaded valuable possessions at bargain rates or even at no cost. After weeks in limbo, Terminal Islanders were given the opportunity to move to Manzanar on April 1st, the first camp ready to take the exiled residents. The eviction transformed the island instantaneously from vibrant community to ghost town. The navy soon occupied East San Pedro, razing homes and shops, and confiscating abandoned boats for military purposes. Lilian Hoffecker. "Terminal Island, California," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Terminal%20Island,%20California/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

So, I did have firsthand knowledge about the impact of the involuntary move. And this actually created a problem for me, because it seemed so unfair.

WP: Did you know any specific people living on Terminal Island?

PHK: Nobody, nobody. In fact, that whole area was a completely unknown area for me. I traveled very little in Los Angeles. The extent of my traveling was by public transportation within the city of Los Angeles. And I once took a bus to Oxnard, which is probably only about 40 miles away, and that was a long trip for me. So, I was very provincial, and I did not know anybody in Terminal Island.

WP: Do you remember anybody that you helped move that day? Did anybody make an impression on you?

PHK: No. I don't remember a single person. I never did ask their names or anything like that. And since I was a passenger in the truck, I don't even know where Terminal Island is in connection with Los Angeles. I know it was [indiscernible] Pacific Ocean, but other than that, I don't know how to get there or anything.

WP: What was the atmosphere like when you got there?

PHK: Disarray, and a lot of other folks like us going from house to house helping move some of their materials, so that they could pack up their things and go live in their temporary quarters with their friends and relatives. So, it was kind of a mixed-emotion area. And I suppose there was kind of a deadened level of emotionality there. They weren't worried about themselves. They weren't concerned about the war. They were concerned about the fact that they had to leave, and that there really was no time to plan for how best to leave, where to go, or what to take.

WP: So, with this prior knowledge of events leading up to the exclusion from the West Coast, how did you feel once you found that you, specifically, were going to be affected by that?

PHK: I guess I just accepted the fact that we had to go. Our family accepted that as fate. It happened, and so we just had to do what we were supposed to do. Prior to that time, of course, we participated fully in the city's blackout regulations. Because of the war, the authorities were very much afraid that the Japanese would come to the West Coast and bomb, especially, the shipyards and areas of industry. And so, localities had blackout orders, and automobiles were not permitted to drive with lights. People had to close all of their blinds and go even farther than that. They had to make sure, by covering with drapes, their windows had to be such that they would leak no light outside. And the purpose was, without lights – and, of course, all streets were gone – without lights, the enemy would not be able to figure out where they were and where their targets might be. And so, in Los Angeles, we all had to douse our lights, and we had block captains who went around and examined all of the housing, including apartments, to make sure that all lights were not discernible from the outside. And if they were, then they would come in and make sure that the residents would put sufficient drapery up, or turn off their lights completely. And they went around, every night, to do this. So, we all complied with that, of course. And so, we participated in that program, just as anybody else would. And no one bothered us for being of Japanese ancestry. There was nothing in our area that indicated a problem.

In rural areas, there were incidents that I read about later on. Newspapers were particularly inflammatory. Churches were not particularly happy about the whole

situation. They were also not vocal about denying the direction in which the government was going. I know that, on reading the Tolan Committee reports, the church groups were not particularly standing up for the rights of the citizenry at all – that the only ACLU group that opposed the evacuation orders was the ACLU of North California, headquartered in San Francisco.[11] National ACLU took no stance, because they didn't want to upset the boat, I guess.

WP: And were you a part of any political organizations or activities at that time?

PHK: No, no, not at all. I was busy going to school.

WP: And so, were you concerned about your schooling being affected when you heard about the evacuation?

PHK: No, I figured I would have to leave, and maybe later on pick up. But I didn't have any particular anxiety about schooling. I knew I had credit, and the credit would stay. And I was that close to graduation anyway.

[11] Tolan Committee: The House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, commonly known as the "Tolan Committee," held hearings in February and March 1942 in four cities about the possible removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. The hearings began two days after Pres. Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 authorized the exclusion from the Pacific Coast of any and all persons that the U.S. military deemed a threat. The Committee did not issue its final report until May 1942, so it played no official role in the decision to remove or incarcerate Japanese Americans. Nevertheless, as hundreds of people presented testimony or written statements to the Committee, it became a major conduit for those trying to influence government policy on this issue. Most historians agree that the Tolan Committee's failure to recommend that U.S. citizens and non-citizens of Japanese descent be accorded the same rights as their counterparts of German and Italian descent represented the final capitulation of the U.S. government to the racist policy of mass removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. Robert Shaffer. "Tolan Committee," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tolan%20Committee/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).
ACLU: American legal organization dedicated to protecting individual rights and liberties, particularly First Amendment rights, rights to equal protection under the law, rights to due process, and rights to privacy. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) played an important but conflicted role in challenging the exclusion of Japanese Americans during World War II, hamstrung by an ideological split among its board members and between the national organization and some of its branches. The Northern California Chapter, headed by Ernest Besig and supported by lawyer Wayne Collins, broke with the national office and actively took cases that opposed the administration's view of the incarceration. Brian Niiya. "American Civil Liberties Union," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/American%20Civil%20Liberties%20Union/(accessed Feb 18 2019).

WP: I think I read somewhere that you had a job offering right before Pearl Harbor. Is that right?

PHK: Yeah. In December, probably three or four days before Pearl Harbor, I got a letter from the federal government saying that I had, on the basis of an unassembled examination, been offered the job of naval ordnance inspector in San Francisco, beginning June 1942. Now, this was on the basis of my two years of engineering at Los Angeles City College. And I had taken a test, and I figured that, after I graduated, I could go work in this engineering-type position, and then, when I had time, I'd go back and matriculate at Cal-Berkeley. And so, I thought that was good. Then, a few days after Pearl Harbor – which would be within a week of my first notice – I got a second notice saying that my first notice was cancelled, and I no longer had the position as naval ordnance inspector. So, for about a week I had a positive job offer in my hand.

WP: How did you feel when you learned that that was no longer a possibility?

PHK: I accepted it. I can understand why there would be a reluctance to have a Japanese American working as a naval ordnance inspector after we lost so many ships at Pearl Harbor. So, I didn't feel any bitterness about that at all.

WP: And did you or anyone in your family own property?

PHK: No. Luckily, we were poor. We had, of course, no concept of poverty. Everybody was poor, and so, we were like everybody else. And that was very fortunate, because then, that meant that we lost very little in being forced to leave LA. My father had some friends, the Judsons [phonetic], who offered to store anything we wanted to store with them. They had room in their garage, and they would be glad to store anything my parents wanted them to keep for them. Because they figured that, after the war was over,

we would be able to return. They knew that the government function would be such that they would not force the person to stay away from the West Coast after the war was over. So, they offered to do that. And they, in fact, drove to our apartment and loaded up two trunks that my father and mother filled up with their belongings, and stored them in their garage. And a number of years later, when my parents returned to Los Angeles and bought a house, the Judsons delivered both trunks to my father and mother. And both trunks, of course, were intact. And that kind of explains the kind of friends my parents had.

Now, the landlord and his wife, of the place where we were staying at the time we had to leave Los Angeles, were quite different. They were glad to store stuff that we had, like a bicycle and vacuum cleaner and some other household things. And they said that they would hold them until we returned. And, as it turned out, when my parents returned and went to the Wendell Warden [phonetic] and his wife, they found out that they had got rid of all of the things, and did not return any of it to my parents. And, of course, earlier, we had to turn over to the local lockup at the Los Angeles police station some of the materials that were called contraband. That was a different story.

WP: So, what kinds of things did your parents lose from the stuff they left with their landlord?

PHK: Just personal stuff, kitchen equipment, some bed clothing, some outerwear, a vacuum cleaner –

WP: And how did your family know the Judsons?

PHK: The Judsons had a hardware store on the west side, about three doors of where my parents had their grocery store. And the Judsons and our parents were good friends from

that time. And my father kept contact with the Judsons after we moved from the west side back to the slum area of LA. And so, the contact was continuing. They would write letters to each other. And, later, I know that the Judsons wrote to my brother, expecting that my brother would then send the letters on to me, but he never did. My brother never thought that I would be interested in what was happening over there. So, he would read the letters that my father and mother had got, and then dispose of them. So, I never did get into any of this correspondence that my parents had with the Judsons. But that relationship remained strong for a number of years. I don't know how it began, but it did begin when the Judsons had their hardware store.

WP: What kind of guidance did you get about what you could bring to Manzanar and what you couldn't bring?

PHK: Well, we got that regular notification that was posted on the telephone poles around town. We did not get a personal copy of that information about what we could carry and what we could not carry. But I do have a copy now of the notices that were posted in San Francisco. So, I use that when I talk about Manzanar, to the various groups where I make presentations.

WP: Can you tell me about what we were talking about earlier, and contraband, with the certain items that you had to give up, that you weren't allowed to keep or bring with you?

PHK: People of Japanese ancestry were instructed to take to their local law enforcement officers all radios, whether they were shortwave or not – all cameras, whether they were small Brownie cameras or good photo taking equipment – all knives, I think, eight or nine-inch blade or longer, including cleavers or anything that could be used as a weapon – and all kinds of knives and swords that a person might have. The lists of this

contraband were included in newspaper articles. So, my father and I took these materials, and carried them to the Los Angeles Police Department, and got a receipt for each item that was meticulously written down, with a full description, like a meat cleaver – I think we had a couple of axes – and two sets of samurai swords – a radio – it was a Crosley radio, I think, and not shortwave at all – and a couple of Brownie cameras that my sister and I had – they were the cheap cameras that were available.

But the most valuable would have been the two samurai sword sets that my father had asked his older brother to send as souvenirs for my older brother and me. Each set had elaborate handles, and each set consisted of two swords – a long sword, which was a two-handed sword – and a short sword – a one-handed sword. My father showed me how the swords could be used, both the long sword and short sword, but he would not remove the swords from the scabbards. He said that, according to tradition, when a sword is removed from the scabbard, it had to draw blood before it could be returned. It could be anybody's blood. It could be your own blood, but it had to be blood. And so, he said he didn't want to cut himself or either my brother or me, and so he would not pull the sword all the way out. But he did pull each sword out, partway, to show us the steel, and there was some engraving on each of the swords. And then, he explained that if the large sword was not handled as a two-handed sword and handled as a one-handed sword, the short sword was handled in the left hand somewhat like a shield, to fend off the enemy's long sword. And the long sword was used for cutting and stabbing – mostly cutting. And the short sword was also used for the ceremonial *seppuku*, *harakiri*. *Seppuku* is S-E-P-P-U-K-U, and

harakiri is H-A-R-I-K-I-R-I.[12] And he explained how the ceremony of *seppuku* goes, and it's a very ghastly story, so I won't tell you. But, mainly, he showed exactly how it's supposed to be done. But mainly it was with the person – it would have to be a samurai, of course – wearing white clothes, and then cutting out his entrails, and tossing them in front of the person to whom an injustice had been done. As an example, if a samurai failed in an assignment, he would go to his leader and he would commit suicide in front of his leader as an act of attrition. So, this kind of sacrifice was considered necessary, and usually that person's best friend would stand behind him, and if he should falter and not be able to complete the complete ceremony, then his best friend was standing behind him to cut off his head at the instant that it was clear that the person was unable to continue the ceremony itself.

So, those two sets of ceremonial swords that my father wanted to give to my brother and me had great sentimental value for my father and for us. And so, that was a major loss, since, after my father returned to Los Angeles, after a stay in Chicago, he went to the Los Angeles Police Department, showed his receipt, and was told that all of the items were lost. So, that was a very unfortunate thing. And my father was not angry about the whole thing. He was disappointed, of course, but, to my surprise, he just took it. And said that, well, it really couldn't be helped. There was nothing he could do about it. So, that was the end of that adventure for him. And since I was already living in Chicago at the time, I was not part of that last disappointment that my father suffered because of his conformance with regulations.

[12] Seppuku and hara-kiri both refer to ceremonial suicide by cutting the belly. Seppuku is the more formal and hara-kiri is the common term.

WP: How did you feel when you learned that that had happened? Did you feel differently than your father?

PHK: No, I felt the same way. I thought, almost, this is to be expected, because even though most of the stuff that we left were of limited value, the two samurai sword sets were valuable – worth, probably, thousands. And it was no surprise that the police department would mishandle both sets. So, I guess I reflected my father's attitude that it just couldn't be helped, and that was that. No anger, nothing else – just simple acceptance of the status quo.

WP: I see. So, what kind of things did you and your family bring to Manzanar? What were you able to bring with you?

PHK: Just, basically, what we felt we needed to have – our clothing, maybe some tableware –

WP: Did you have any expectations of what Manzanar was going to be like? Or did you have an idea where you were going?

PHK: No, we did not. At the beginning, when we packed, we didn't know whether we would be going to a cold country or a hot country or a desert country or where. And we had no idea about Manzanar. We didn't know much about how hot it would be, or how cold it would be. No one told us that desert country is hot in the summer and cold at night and in the winter. We didn't know anything about snow out there. In LA, we had no snow at all. And so, we didn't experience any snow. So, when it got cold, it probably got down to about 35 degrees. At Manzanar, it got colder than that. And at Manzanar, also, like Independence, got over 100. So, we didn't really know what to take, so we took a few sweaters along, extra clothing, some bedding – not much, because there wasn't much that we could carry. I had my typewriter that I earned when I was going to Los Angeles City

College, through my working for NRA as a typist. National Recovery Act, part of President Roosevelt's plan to get us out of the Depression, allowed students at universities and junior colleges to work to earn money while they were going to school. So, I earned enough money to pay for a typewriter. So, I took my typewriter, three or four books, and some clothing.

WP: Do you remember what books you brought with you?

PHK: I took a dictionary, for one thing. I don't remember what the other ones were. I think they were not technical books. I think one might have been a social/anthropological type of a book, like *From Many Lands* by Louis Adamic.[13] But I don't remember what books I really took, because it was only about three books, maybe. It was not the Bible, I know that.

WP: Was it difficult for you to leave, and leave your friends that you had made at LA City College and before?

PHK: Yeah, it was difficult to leave my friends. I didn't particularly care for that, at all. And for a while, I would write to them, but eventually that dwindled down to nothing, especially after I went to Chicago.

WP: Can you tell me about the day that you and your family left for Manzanar?

PHK: Ok. We stayed up quite a bit. You couldn't go to sleep or anything.

WP: The night before?

PHK: Yeah. I guess our actual notice on the telephone poles was less than a week before we left. So, we really didn't have that much time between the actual notice and the actual

[13] Louis Adamic was a Slovenian American author most well-known for advocating for ethnic diversity in America. *From Many Lands* was published in 1940.

move. And, as I said, the notice was on the telephone pole. And the day after the notice was posted, we had to register at a center.

WP: Do you know where you had to register, or where the center was that you registered at?

PHK: You know, I had some notes, and I could look at that.

WP: Well, that's ok.

PHK: May 11th of '42, the orders appeared on the telephone poles. And it showed the exact boundaries, and I took down the exact boundaries of the group that had to leave. That was May 11. May 12, I registered at the Southern Pacific Railway Station. And then, that was May 12th. May 14th, we had medical examinations – not too extensive. And that also was given at the Southern Pacific Depot. So, apparently the Southern Pacific was the main place. And that's when we were supposed to leave, on May 16th. So, on the 15th, then, we stayed up the whole night, and spend the whole time packing and repacking. You know, we had to decide how much we could take, and then found out that some of the things we thought we would want to take, we couldn't pack in.

WP: And so, you left the next morning?

PHK: Yeah, according to my record here, at four o'clock we were ready to go. And at 5:45, the landlord helped us load the car with some of the stuff, and then we left for the railway station. And we were able to put our heavy things into a freight car, which was parked there, a little after six o'clock in the morning. And then, instead of leaving by train, we were herded onto a bus. And we left at 8:30 in the morning, although the departure time was supposed to be two hours earlier. And it was such that they stopped and gave us time to eat lunch, stretch our legs. And then we got to Manzanar.

WP: Did you know other people on the bus with you?

PHK: No, no. As I said, we didn't know many people where we were living. And it was in that small geographic area that all people of Japanese ancestry were just put together as a group. And then, other groups were there. But things were so hectic, we didn't see much of anybody, actually. We got there early in the morning, and then, within a couple of hours, we left the station. So, there really wasn't much time to sit around and kind of wonder about where we were going to go.

WP: Do you remember what the atmosphere was like, or how you were feeling, or how your family was feeling at that time?

PHK: Well, we wondered where we were going to go. And I remember that the buses had shades, and all the shades had to be drawn. I don't know why – either so that we couldn't see out, or else people couldn't see in. I don't know. But at the rest stop, I remember that there were Salvation Army volunteers, and they were passing out coffee and doughnuts and little snacks to all of us. So, they were there. And they were also there at the Southern Pacific Railway Station where we left. So, the Salvation Army people were there to comfort us, and then to, also, provide some refreshment. Because of that, my wife and I continue to contribute to the Salvation Army.

WP: Oh, wow. So, it made a big impression on you, that they did that for you?

PHK: Yeah, yeah. We thought that was good. And, of course, I had already encountered the Salvation Army when I was five years old, or a six year old, when we were living in that hotel in Skid Row. Because once a week, a small group of Salvation Army, dressed in their Salvation Army clothes, would come in front of the saloon, which was below our hotel. And they would sing religious songs. I remember there was a bass drum – there was a slide trombone – and, I think, a saxophone – and tambourines. And they would

sing, and then one man would give a short sermon to all these drunks that were there. And some of the drunks, of course, would laugh, and others would kind of drool as they sat and watched. And then, after a while, the group of Salvation Army representatives would move on to another tavern, and go through their routine again. So, I'd had early knowledge of the Salvation Army, but I was especially happy to see them at the railroad station, and at the rest stop. Because it was nice to have some whites who were friendly and solicitous. So, our contact with the Salvation Army was always positive.

WP: Were there any military police who were at the station or on the bus with you?

PHK: At the station, I don't remember any. And I don't remember that there were any on the bus, either. But I do remember that, when we got to Manzanar, there were bayoneted guards with their rifles standing around all over the place.

WP: How did you feel about that?

PHK: Pretty rotten. Because I didn't think that we were posing any danger at all. I thought it was a complete affront to us, anyhow, to start with. And then, to have these men with bayonets on their rifles was kind of much.

WP: What was your first impression of Manzanar when you arrived?

PHK: Well, my first impression was that it was a lousy place. It was dusty, and I didn't particularly care for the barbed wire fencing that was around there, or the fencing with the barbed wire on top, and armed guards, of course. I never have been a camper. I hated camping, in fact. So, camp life never did appeal to me. And so, to be forced into a camp like that was pretty bad. The tarpaper structure for the camp was not particularly appealing, either. And then, when we got into the barracks themselves, they were god-awful, I thought – small. Each unit, at that time, was 20 by 20, and each unit for

Manzanar, to start with, had to have seven people in there. And so, 19-9-2 was where we were placed, and that meant Block 19, building number 9, and section number 2. And this was 20 feet by 20 feet, because each barrack was 100 foot long and 20 feet wide. And each barrack was divided into five units at the time, to start with, because all of the blocks of barracks had not been completed at the time we went in. And so, my impression was extremely poor. Seven people in 20 by 20 is almost impossible to consider.

And when we got there, we were able to carry in our luggage. And we found seven wooden cots, seven mattress bags. Each cot had a bag on there, and each cot had two brown, wool, World War I army blankets. The cots were the folding cots – wooden. Each unit was supposed to have seven people, because the number of evacuees that were assigned were such that the calculations indicated each unit must have a minimum of seven people. In our case, our family unit was five, and so, a single woman and her teenage son were also added to our unit. So, we had seven people in the unit, and we never got to know them. [Indiscernible].

WP: Do you know their names?

PHK: And so, our first impressions were very negative, to say the least.

WP: Do you know the names of the two people who were in your apartment?

PHK: Oh, never did get to know them. They were strangers to start with, and strangers to end with. After a period of time, they were able to move out. And so, the unit of 20 by 20, then, became completely ours. But for a couple of weeks, that's about it, they had to stay with us. And as other units got built, then they were moved.

WP: And what was going through your mind that first night when you were there?

PHK: I wondered how we were going to live in this kind of a situation. We, in the morning, each got a typhoid shot. And I thought that was good, because at least that prevented a spread of any kind of disease. We also took our canvas bags, which were to be our mattresses, out to the front of the barracks, where a pile of straw had been piled up. And we were told that, if we would fill the bags with the straw, and then close the zipper, then we would have a mattress that we could put on top of the wooden cots. So, each of us filled our own bags, including my younger sister, who was then 16. So, we each was able to do our work. My father and mother filled their bags. My brother and I filled ours. My sister filled hers.

My mother overfilled her bag, and we laughed at her because the rest of us filled our bags only to the point where it looked like a mattress – rectangular, squared off. And my mother said that she wanted to fill her bag full. And so, she just forced more and more straw into her bag, to such an extent that it was kind of rounded. And we laughed at her, and told her that she'll probably fall off because it was rounded so much. Morning, we woke up to find out that our backs were right against the slat of the wooden cots. And my mother's mattress had been flattened down, so that, now, it looked like a mattress. But she had a more comfortable time during the night than we did, and she never did say, "I told you so," nor did she laugh at us. It was one of those things that happened, and we had laughed at her, and she definitely did not laugh back at us. We deserved for her to laugh at us. Things like that were not all that pleasant, at the time. It's more fun to recollect than to endure.

WP: Did you or your family improve your barracks over time, or decorate your apartment?

PHK: Well, we were able, later on, to move to Block 33. And by that time, we were able to have plasterboard placed on the walls, so that we had some protection against the wind. And so, when we moved out of Block 19 into Block 33, the size of our room had grown from 20 by 20 to 20 by 25, because, there, the units were four to a building rather than five. So, we had larger quarters. And we had plasterboard ceilings as well as walls. And so, it was a much better living arrangement than our earlier living quarters in Block 19. So, yes, it was improved, to that extent. Our cots were then changed from the wooden cots to cots that had springs in there. It was metal cots instead. So, we did have an improvement in that. As my mother worked in a mattress factory, and as production improved, we were able to get real mattresses to replace the straw mattresses that we had. So, we did have some improvement in living conditions, within probably three to four months.

WP: What were your impressions of the physical landscape at Manzanar?

PHK: Oh. Very negative, because it was all sandy soil. There was a lot of firebreaks between blocks, and roads were oiled roads, so that the vehicles could run on a sandy foundation. It wasn't until later that I was able to go out into the area where there were some greeneries. So, most of the time that I spent there, which was only a year, I did not see all of the changes that were made after I had left. The area did not have sufficient playground area. There was area between blocks used for softball. Mess halls were used for dancing. We had outdoor movies. Big wooden screens were built, whitewashed, to become the screen for movies that were held twice a week. And people sat on blankets outside to watch the movies. But all in all, during the period I was there, improvements were slow in coming. One of the things that I thought was very good was, they allowed

us to have a cooperative store. And the cooperative store at least provided the opportunity for residents to buy things that they would like to have for their personal use. And a number of these things were notions and clothing, and other things that became available as time went on. So, the coop store that was set up was a great boon. It also enabled job opportunities for people as well.

WP: Did you spend most of your time in Block 33, that you were there?

PHK: No, I spent more of my time down in the education area, because I thought that education was very important. And so, I went to the administration area more than spending time in Block 33.

WP: Well, the limited time that you did spend in Block 33, can you kind of describe what that block was like?

PHK: Would you repeat that?

WP: The time that you did spend in Block 33, could you kind of briefly describe what the block was like, and what the community of people who lived there was like?

PHK: Oh, yeah. The administration set up a democratic system of government, so-called. And each block elected a block leader. And the block leader represented the interests of the people within that block. And each block had something like 12 barracks – about 12 barracks.[14] And block leaders, then, as a group, formed a block council. And that council then met periodically with the administrative staff to talk about regulations or complaints or suggestions or whatever. The unfortunate part was that most of the block leaders were the *Issei* group or the *Kibei* group – mostly *Kibei* group, because they spoke both Japanese and English. And the *Nisei* group, generally, were excluded. So, the representation was primarily of the people who were reluctant to follow the

[14] Each block at Manzanar had 14 barrack buildings.

administrative regulations and suggestions. And most of us *Nisei*, then, referred to the block leaders as "blockheads," for two reasons, of course – they were blockheads, but then they were the head of the blocks. So, we actually held them, primarily, in derision, because they really did not represent too many of us. They represented, primarily, the group that were anti-administration. And so, the administration had difficulty working with this council that was developed. So, the democratic idea, or the idea of introducing democratic functioning in the camps was good, but the execution of it was unfortunately poor, because of the people who rose to the top of the heap.

WP: Were you actively involved in the negotiation of that community government?

PHK: No, because I felt out of place. To start with, I was completely anti-anti-American. And so, I disagreed with many of the people. A number of the people who were still bitter about what happened, and they wanted to drag their heels whenever the administration asked for something to happen. I wanted to follow the suggestions made by administrative staff. I wanted to see a good educational program. I did not want to see any interference with the administrative direction of the governing group. So, I stayed away from this block organization, as did many of my friends. They felt it useless, because of the direction that the leadership was going, and the fact that most people were reluctant to join me in being anti-anti-American.

WP: Were you a part of any organizations in camp, along with other people who felt the same way that you did, that weren't necessarily a part of that block organization?

PHK: We did not form a regular organization. We just kind of resisted joining in with this display of democracy.

WP: Were you familiar with the people who were part of the Japanese American Citizens League at Manzanar?[15]

PHK: Yes, yes. And that was part of the reason why I got on the list, I think. There was a couple of reasons why I got on that list, which was a hate list of this group that was bitter against what happened. One was that many of the views I was holding were identical with those of JACL – and then, my stance against the anti-administrative group. Then, of course, I twice tried to get into the US Armed Forces. First, a group of recruiters from the army – one of them was a friend of mine, Sweeney [phonetic] – came through camp to try to find people who could be interpreter-interrogators, who eventually would become members of the Military Intelligence Service, to interrogate prisoners and interpret military documents, letters, and other things that might be obtained from the enemy.[16] I

[15] The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), formed in 1929, became the most well-known, influential Japanese American organization in the United States, but its history is not without controversy. The decision of the wartime JACL's leadership to cooperate with the federal government in the mass exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II elicited harsh criticism from those who believed the organization should have done more to defend Japanese Americans' rights during the war. The JACL's wartime opposition of test cases and criticism of resisters and dissenters remains a painful source of division today. After the war, the JACL became active in turning back discriminatory legislation through the courts, lobbied for legislation that would allow greater rights for Japanese immigrants and subsequent generations of American citizens of various ethnic and racial backgrounds, and was a key player in the redress movement. Though still in existence today, the JACL has seen its influence and membership wane with the changing demographics and politics of the contemporary Asian American community. Cherstin Lyon. "Japanese American Citizens League," *Densho Encyclopedia*https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese%20American%20Citizens%20League/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

[16] Under a shroud of secrecy and with the backing of the United States War Department, the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) trained and graduated nearly 6,000 linguists—the majority of whom were Japanese Americans. Due to the security-classified nature of their activities, Nisei members of the MIS never received as much publicity as their counterparts in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RTC) and 100th Infantry Battalion. They ultimately played a decisive role in the victory of American forces over Japan in the Pacific. They were among the first soldiers to arrive in Japan after its surrender, and they became some of the first American observers to witness the destructive effects of the atomic bombs that had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Nisei later served in important positions in the occupation of Japan and more than seventy MIS linguists provided translation and interpreter services for the war crimes trials held in Japan, China, the Philippines, French Indochina, and the East Indies. As Japanese Americans, these linguists turned out to be instrumental in bridging cultural and linguistic differences and helped to establish the foundations for postwar relations between Japan and the United States. Kelli Nakamura. "Military Intelligence Service," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Military%20Intelligence%20Service/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

failed the screening examination, primarily because I'd had, as I earlier said, only a third year of Japanese school education. And so, I failed that exam, and they would not accept me, even though I said I'd be eager to learn Japanese and would be willing to enter the Military Intelligence Service. So, I was rejected, and that was that. The second time was when the 442 team was started, primarily through the influence of JACL and the federal administration.[17] Recruiters came through about a month after the earlier recruiter group came through, and in February of 1942, I volunteered from Manzanar to join the Regimental Combat Team, 442. And because of my eyesight, I was rejected. So, that meant that I was rejected by the army twice. But, more importantly, from the standpoint of the camp residents, it was clear that I had aligned myself against a number of people, but for the United States. That, coupled with my anti-anti-American status, and my working with Fred Tayama and Togo Tanaka and others of the JACL – I guess my time at Manzanar was coming to a close, and it was so bad that, as I said, my name was on the list.[18]

[17] The 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was organized on March 23, 1943, after more than a year during which Americans of Japanese descent were declared enemy aliens, 4-C, by the U.S. War Department. It had taken all that time plus several key events to convince the Roosevelt Administration that these men should be allowed to enter combat for their country. Eventually, the 442nd, bolstered by the combat-hardened 100th Infantry Battalion, comprised of Japanese American draftees from Hawai'i, became the most decorated unit in U.S. military history for its size and length of service. Franklin Odo. "442nd Regimental Combat Team," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/442nd%20Regimental%20Combat%20Team/(accessed Feb 18 2019).

[18] Businessman, Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) leader, beating victim at Manzanar. Fred Tayama (1905–66) was a JACL leader whose beating at Manzanar set off a chain of events leading to a riot/uprising at the camp. Brian Niiya. "Fred Tayama," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Fred%20Tayama/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

Newspaper editor, documentary historian, and businessman. An influential English language editor of the *Rafu Shimpo* newspaper, Togo Tanaka (1916–2009) was one of the leading voices of the Nisei generation before the war. Incarcerated at Manzanar, he helped to chronicle the incarceration for both the federal government and for a University of California research project. He became a successful publisher and real estate investor after the war. Brian Niiya. "Togo Tanaka," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Togo%20Tanaka/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

My parents learned about it – my mother at the mattress factory, and my father at the mess hall where he was working – to such an extent that they found out that I might be a target for some beating. And so, my father swiped two bags of pepper from the mess hall, one black pepper and one red pepper. Our unit had only one door for entry. So, our plan that my parents worked out – my mother would stand on one side of the doorway, my father on the other. Each would have a bag of pepper. And my brother and I had baseball bats, and we were supposed to use the bat against anyone who would try to come in after me. My mother and father would toss pepper in their faces, and my brother and I would hit them with the bats. And that way, we would thwart any attempt for people to come in after me. So, it got to that bad a situation. So, nothing happened, actually.

WP: Did you come up with this plan before the Manzanar riot had happened, or was this after?[19]

PHK: Oh, this was after. Because this was after I had volunteered twice. So, this would be in February and March – probably March of 1943.

WP: And can you describe for me the tensions that you've kind of talked about already, that evolved in camp from the time that you got there maybe to just before the Manzanar riot?

PHK: Well, the beginning feeling was a considerable amount of bitterness among the people, and a lot of talking about how the injustice was there, and the fact that American citizenship had been avoided in terms of rights and that sort of thing. And there was some

[19] A December 1942 incident at the Manzanar camp that resulted in the institution of martial law at the camp and that culminated with soldiers firing into a crowd of inmates, killing two and injuring many. The incident was triggered by the beating of Japanese American Citizens League leader Fred Tayama upon his return from a meeting in Salt Lake City and the arrest and detention of Harry Ueno for the beating. Coming one year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, sensationalist coverage of the event inflamed anti-Japanese sentiment outside the camps. The episode exposed deep divisions within the inmate population and with the camp administration. Brian Niiya. "Manzanar riot/uprising," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Manzanar%20riot/uprising/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

grumbling about that. But my friends and I decided that one thing we had to do was think about the elementary and high school students who had to leave before their second semester was up. And that they might lose the credits that they had earned, in terms of being promoted from one grade to another.

And so, we set up a volunteer summer school session as soon as we could. And we got permission to and used the mess halls for our schoolrooms, between breakfast, lunch, and before dinner, so that we would be able to use the mess hall facilities as schoolrooms. The mess halls all had picnic tables set up with linoleum topping. And so, they would be ok for use as classrooms. And so, we were able to pool together people who would be volunteer teachers. We called them "teachers," although, actually, we were not certified at all. I suppose, in actual fact, we were more tutors than teachers. But we taught. We taught classes. A few were certified teachers, but I don't know how many – probably no more than two or three. And the rest of us were all volunteers, post high school, primarily college students, and a few with undergraduate degrees. And we taught school, after we were able to pool together a lot of donations from a variety of sources including churches and elementary and secondary schools, and from Los Angeles City College and other educational facilities that donated a lot of material to us. And, many years later, I found out that the same thing happened at each of the ten relocation centers. The college-age students saw the need for continuing the education of elementary and secondary students, and so they set up a quasi-educational system. And in each case, the state approved all of the grades that were given out by the makeshift teaching group.

By September-October of 1942, then, we had a superintendent of education, a high school principal, a junior high school principal, and a school was started in Manzanar. But until then, we were able to provide this supplementary education. And so, any child who went through our system was able to preserve their school status, and were not held back because of the fact that they were not able to complete their education. Subsequently, of course, you know that many junior colleges and colleges in California have given degrees, about 40 or 50 years afterwards, to the students who were not able to complete their education – like, those who were in their last year of their curriculum. So, it was not, then, an unusual bending of the rules by the California State Department of Education. So, we were able to be part of that. So, that meant that those of us who participated were able to get over our bitterness, and move into a helping mode. And that made a big difference, I think, in terms of how we felt and how our group did help out the camp population.

WP: And was this group that you worked with, organizing the teaching for that summer – was it all Japanese Americans, or did the administration help in any way, with you guys, setting that up?

PHK: Well, they helped by providing us the facilities, but the teaching was all by us, as volunteers. At that point, there were no teachers available. They came in later.

WP: And do you remember any of the other people that you worked with during that summer?

PHK: Yeah, but I've never communicated with them since.

WP: Could you tell me some of the names of people you worked with?

PHK: Yeah, I think one of them was Shizuo Hori – S-H-I-Z-U-O, Hori, H-O-R-I. And I think there was a Paul Ichino – I-C-H-I-N-O – Chizuru Nakaji – C-H-I-Z-U-R-U, Nakaji, N-A-K-A-J-I; Tom Watanabe – W-A-T-A-N-A-B-E. I can't think of any others.

WP: Oh, that's great. Thanks for giving me those names. And so –

PHK: I've lost touch with all of them.

WP: Yeah? Did you keep in contact with them when you left Manzanar?

PHK: No. Well, with Shiz Hori, and that's about it – and Paul Ichino, that's right.

WP: And did you just teach holistic subjects for that grade level?

PHK: I taught eighth grade math and English. Oh, there was a Hannah Tani – T-A-N-I. And there was a Honey Toda, T-O-D-A. That's right. Those were guys – they were there too.

WP: And were the kids pretty responsive to that schooling that summer?

PHK: Yeah, they came in pretty well with it. And we did pretty well. See, I was 19 and 20. And the kids were eighth graders. And so, there was not too much of an age difference, but we got along quite well. One of the students yelled out at me, "Hey, Stinky" – he called me "Stinky" – "what's the lesson for today?" or something like that. So, I immediately, sternly said, "You have to show some respect." I said, "From now on, you may call me 'Mr. Stinky.'" And so, it was like that. We had a good rapport between students and teachers. And we got along well. The students did dig in, and they did their work. And we corrected the papers and did all what we thought we were supposed to do as teachers. And the students got along quite well. I think, basically, they thought of themselves as students, too, within the school system, because they hadn't left it too long earlier.

WP: Did you enjoy teaching?

PHK: I enjoyed it, yes. It was fun. At that time, I didn't have any other work to do anyway.

WP: Yeah, that brings me to another question – did you have any other jobs while you were at Manzanar?

PHK: Yeah, when I was first employed, I was a supervisor of the census takers. We had to run a census of all residents, to find out what people were capable of doing. And so, we used the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* that the labor department uses. And I helped decide at what level of categorization we should ask information about, and how to interpret the responses and place them in the proper categories according to the dictionary listing. And so, we went to three digits, I think. And I instructed the staff to do this. And then, the census takers all went out and interviewed all adults. And, as a result of the interview findings, and according to the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* categories, we were able to sort out what kinds of people were equipped to handle what kinds of jobs. And so, what that meant – we were able to find out people who might be interested or had the background to become security officers, work on the farms, work as teachers, and various kinds of jobs that would be open – sales clerk, common laborer, what all. And so, my first job, therefore, was supervisor of the census takers. And then, later, I got a job as a supervisor of adult education. And those are the two major jobs that I had while I was in the relocation center.

WP: And how much did you get paid for those jobs?

PHK: As a census supervisor, I got $16 a month. The pay ranges were – unskilled laborer was $12 – skilled and managerial was $16 – and then, professional was $19. Professional would include nurses and doctors and dentists and lawyers and whatever like that. So, I was getting $16 then, as a manager. But everybody also got clothing allowances, too. So,

everybody got about two and a half dollars a month for clothing. I don't remember the exact amount.

WP: And what jobs did your parents have at Manzanar?

PHK: My mother got a job in a mattress factory, because her background was sewing. She had a lot of experience and expertise as a sewer. And she could operate the industry-grade sewing machine, too. And so, she became a mattress factory operator. My father took on a job right away in the mess hall. He had no experience at all being in the mess hall, but there wasn't any job open for fruit and vegetable clerks or for a hotel keeper, or anything like that. So, he took on the job in the mess hall. My older brother became a foreman in the camouflage net factory. Our camp, like many others, manufactured camouflage nets, which were used for overseas artillery gun emplacements. You'd put them over the artillery guns, and that protected them from the bombers, who would be unable to detect where the artillery armors would be set on the battlefield. So, we were manufacturing hundreds of those nets.

WP: Do you remember any controversies associated with the camouflage net factory?

PHK: There was none. No one paid any attention to it. They knew what it was for, but no one raised any fuss about the fact that we were helping our country by doing that. There was nothing like that. And Manzanar was the only center that was growing guayule. That's a plant that was supposed to be usable by converting the sap of the guayule plant into rubber. And I don't [indiscernible] exactly what came of it, but Manzanar was the camp that was growing guayule to help out in the war effort. So, we had no commotion about that, either. In terms of occupation, at Manzanar we had hog farms as well as regular farm products. So, we had a lot of different kinds of jobs open.

WP: What did your father do in the mess hall?

PHK: He basically helped prepare the food, and then, also, to dish out the food.

WP: And did either of your parents participate in the adult education, and what you were working with?

PHK: I think my mother might have taken some part in the sewing projects. My father just took part by borrowing books from the library that we had set up through our adult education. They did not take part in any of the classes.

WP: Did you partake in any other hobbies or activities or organizations that were going on in camp, other than what you've already mentioned?

PHK: Well, one time I was a disc jockey at one of the camp dances that was held periodically. So, we had donated records, and I played some of those.

WP: Did you have experience with that before?

PHK: No, not at all. It had to be done, and there was nobody else who volunteered to do that, so I just did it.

WP: That sounds fun.

PHK: Did not have to announce anything, either.

WP: That makes it a little easier, I'm sure.

PHK: Yeah, yeah. It was just a mechanical job.

WP: Were you involved in anything else?

PHK: No, I never did play ball or anything like that, because I tried to avoid exercising as much as possible.

WP: What was your social life like at Manzanar?

PHK: Well, we had a reading club, so we would read and discuss books, and do that. I was not particularly partial to dancing or anything. Some of the men would play cards. Other than that, I guess I didn't do much of anything else. Every once in a while, I would attend the outdoor movies, and sit in at the outdoor record playing, where there would be some playing of symphonies and classical music. That was on some nights.

WP: The relationship between your family members – did that change at all when you went to Manzanar?

PHK: Well, I don't know, because our family did not particularly interact with other families that much, and our relatives were sent to other camps. And interactions were just, primarily, within the same block. So, I guess most of it just happened to be as it would be in the ordinary community. It would not be long distance or anything like that. And we did not have friends get to Manzanar the same time we did.

WP: What about the relationship between you and your close family members, like your siblings and your parents? Did those change?

PHK: Yeah, I guess they really did. My brother went out with other groups of men, and my sister went out with her girlfriends. And so, we didn't spend much time together. There was a sociological shift because of the camp life. And there was a disruption of family relationships, in general. Generally speaking, families liked to eat together before the war. With relocation, however, families did not have to eat together, because mess halls were used. And teenagers generally liked to hang out together, alone, away from their parents. And so, they generally drifted away. There was no need for parents to work. If they didn't want to work, food and shelter and everything else was provided. And so, the children quickly learned that the family constellation had changed. And I think this has

made a major sociological change in the family construction of many Japanese families. And I don't know what the effect of that would be. I think one effect that turned out was, I believe that the delinquency rate among Japanese Americans increased. And I think part of that was because of the diminished influence of the family on itself.

WP: Did you feel that happen within your own family?

PHK: Oh, no, I don't think so. I think there was the effect of maturity, in that both my brother and I were already high school graduates. My sister was in the senior class of Manzanar High School. And so, there was the natural independence that was starting to crop up, even though, at the time, we all lived in the same unit. And I, of course, left a little after a year. And my parents and brother and sister lived together at Manzanar for a couple of years after that.

WP: Did you have a lot of contact with the administrative workers at Manzanar?

PHK: Quite a bit, primarily with the people in education. I got to know a number of the teachers. I got to know the high school principal, the superintendent of education and the assistant superintendent of education, probably five or six teaching staff.

WP: Could you list some of those people for me – their names?

PHK: Genevieve Carter was the superintendent; something Wood was her assistant; Clive Greenlee – Eva Mary Beekman.[20] Oh, I've forgot the guy's name – Frizzell.

WP: Yeah, Louis Frizzell?

PHK: Yeah, Louis Frizzell. Yeah, he was one of the best. He also, later, was in the movies. In fact, yeah, he was in, like, some of these series that went on.

WP: And can you tell me what he was like? What his personality was like?

[20] Dr. Velma Woods was the secretary for the education department. Eva Mary Beekman was an elementary school teacher.

PHK: Well, Louis Frizzell was a friendly music teacher. He was very interested in writing music. And he put on a show for Manzanar, and wrote the music himself, not only the lyrics, but also the music itself, and produced the whole works. A number of people in Manzanar probably still remember the whole play itself. It was a musical that he put on, and all of the singers and actors were high school students. And some were from his classes, and there were others from other classes as well. He was very friendly, and good friends with Shizuo Hori and me. We would go over there and spend a lot of time with him. And Clyde – C-L-Y-D-E – was also called Clive – C-L-I-V-E – Greenlee. And he's blind. And he was the one who showed me how a blind person can shave, and, also, when you're leading a blind person, you don't hold the person. You have the blind person hold you as you lead the person around. He was also great. I think he taught English. Eva Mary Beekman was also a very nice person. There was a Janet Goldberg.[21] Genevieve Carter – I later ran into her again in Chicago, when I was a student at University of Chicago. She was in social research.

WP: What was that like, running into her again?

PHK: Very good. It was very nice to see somebody again from Manzanar. The others, like Louis Frizzell and Clive Greenlee, I didn't see again. But I saw Louis Frizzell in movies, though. He was Kojak, for example.

WP: And did you have contact with any of the military policemen?

PHK: No, none. I never talked with a single one of them. It was enough that I saw them. I saw them up in the guard towers, too.

WP: How did you feel about the guard towers, and having military police, and the security that was surrounding Manzanar?

[21] Janet Goldberg was a secondary journalism and social studies teacher.

PHK: I didn't like it. Well, of course, I didn't like being in a camp. But I was not impressed with the military, because I knew that the best military personnel would be sent overseas to fight. And the leftovers would be used as guards, and they probably would not be the best to put on the line, because they probably would not be trustworthy. And so, I had little respect for the soldiers, because I thought they would have to be second level or third level men who were not really qualified to be in the frontlines.

WP: Do you recall an incident where a man named Hikoji Takeuchi was shot?[22]

PHK: No, I don't. I don't remember that, unless that was in the December riot?

WP: It was before the December riot. He was collecting wood near the fence. And a colleague of mine – we were talking the other day, and wondering if that something that was well known in camp, that made an impression on people? Or if that was something that wasn't really talked about?

PHK: I guess it wasn't really talked about, because I heard about it after I had left the center completely. But while I was there, I didn't even know about it.

WP: What kind of communications did you have with people outside of Manzanar?

PHK: I wrote a lot of letters, and saw them when they came in.

WP: Saw the letters when they came in?

PHK: No, the people, like, Richardson and Afton Nance – John Chenoweth, who was an economics professor at Los Angeles City College, a good friend of O.D. Richardson.

WP: And they all came to visit you?

PHK: No, they just came to visit the camp. And so, then, I would go see them.

WP: What was it like to meet with them and talk with them?

[22] For more on Hikoji Takeuchi, see Manzanar Oral History interview, MANZ-1004; Hikoji Takeuchi was shot in May 1942 by a MP. He was gathering scrap wood to make furniture for his family. The MP later bragged of his conquest. Hikoji survived his severe stomach wounds, but later was transferred to Tule Lake and sent to Japan.

PHK: Well, it was regular, friendly discourse. I was glad that they had the interest to come all the way out to Manzanar, because I knew it was a long trip from LA out to Manzanar. And I appreciated what they were doing.

WP: Do you remember what you talked about?

PHK: Well, with Richardson, he came and he would run a discussion group about politics and about how people should act or not act, the best way for the *Nisei* to handle the situation, that sort of thing, and with Mrs. Nance, we just talked about education and how students were doing in camp as compared to before, and what kinds of reactions some of her former students were having, and just general kind of discussion like that. So, Dr. Richardson, basically, came out to help with our educational and thinking processes. And he wanted to impress on us that being American is not so bad. And he was right. And he did a good job of doing it. And most of us who participated really thought well of him, and thought that he gave us good things to think about.

WP: And can you tell me about Miss Nance, and who she was, and how you knew her?

PHK: She was a schoolteacher in Manhattan Beach. And somehow or other, she got interested in Manzanar, because some of her elementary school students apparently wound up at Manzanar. And so, she was helpful in setting up the school system, the summer school system. And we were able to have her round up a number of the kind of materials that we needed for our educational program. So, she was very active in helping to do some of the planning for our system. So, she was an outsider who came in and did help us with our initial planning, and helped us with our gathering of the school supplies.

WP: Did you know her before you came to Manzanar?

PHK: Oh, no, never met her, because she was teaching in Manhattan Beach, and I didn't even know where Manhattan Beach was. So, I met her in Manzanar. And her interest in the *Nisei* was quite obvious, and her interest in what we were thinking and doing also was quite obvious. And for that reason, I corresponded with her more than with anybody else.

WP: Yeah, it sounds like she was really instrumental in writing to people who were at Manzanar, and getting a look into what life was like.

PHK: Yeah, and I'm surprised that she kept all of that material too. She had a sense for history.

WP: Yeah, it's pretty amazing to read all those letters that are now at the Japanese American National Museum, that she donated.

PHK: Yeah, I was amazed that she had kept all that stuff, but she did.

WP: And did you keep in contact with her after you left Manzanar?

PHK: Yes. In fact, she came to visit us – my wife and me – a couple of times afterwards, in Madison. So, I guess she was on her way to visit some other friends or relatives in the area, and then she stopped by a couple of times and talked with them.

WP: I'm going to p –

[End of audio]

MANZANAR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Oral History Project

NARRATOR: Paul H. Kusuda (PHK)

INTERVIEWER: Whitney Peterson (WP)

INTERVIEW NUMBER: MANZ 1393B

INTERVIEW DATE: August 4, 2013

TRANSCRIBER: Audio Transcription Center

PREFERRED CITATION FORMAT:

Kusuda, Paul H., interview by Whitney Peterson, 2013, Manzanar Oral History Project Interview 1393B (transcript), Manzanar National Historic Site, National Park Service

NOTE TO READERS:

This transcript includes edits from the narrator's daughter Misao Kusuda (2018). Smaller edits are incorporated into the body of the transcript. Larger edits are footnoted. As a result, this is not a verbatim transcription of the audio or video interview.

INTERVIEW:

[Begin MANZ 1393B_1]

WP: So, today is August 4, 2013. This is Whitney Peterson with Manzanar National Historic Site. And we're continuing an oral history with Paul Kusuda. And, Paul, do I have permission to record this interview, and add it to our library here at Manzanar?

PHK: Yes, you do.

WP: Ok, thank you. So, you had sent me a number of documents before we started your oral history. And you have a lot of meeting notes, some with the Manzanar Citizens' Federation and the Manzanar Charter also a reading club.

PHK: Yeah.

WP: How did you come to have these notes? Were you in charge of taking notes for various organizational meetings?

PHK: For some of it, yes. And others, I just took notes so I could send them off to Afton Nance and Dr. Richardson, because they were interested in what I was doing. So, it's a combination. Some was part of my responsibility in adult education, and others were just personal.[1]

WP: And did Afton Nance and Mr. Richardson – were they concerned in documenting what was going on at Manzanar for a specific reason that they told you about?

PHK: No, they were just interested in helping us out, and that interest started before the war, I think.

WP: Can you tell me a little bit about the Manzanar Citizens' Federation? And were you involved in that at all?

PHK: No, I stayed out of it, because the tenor of it was mostly anti-administration.

[1] See PHK's description of Nance and Richardson in Manzanar Oral History interview, MANZ 1393A.

WP: And so, what was the goal of the organization, from your perspective?

PHK: It was supposedly set up for the federal government to try to illustrate how democracy actually operates. And so, each of the 36 blocks had a leader who was elected, and then all of the leaders, then, formed a council that met either weekly or monthly with administrative staff of the federal government.

WP: And this was separate from the block managers who were in each block?

PHK: No, that was the block managers. So, it was the block managers who formed the council, then.

WP: I see. How would you characterize the relationship between *Issei*, *Nisei*, and *Kibei* at Manzanar?[2]

PHK: Basically, the *Kibei* were the loudmouth people who tried to instigate and foment rebellious attitudes and efforts to counter administrative efforts. The *Issei*, generally, felt that they should follow whatever the administration of the center suggested, and were compliant insofar as rules and regulations were issued. The relationship between *Issei* and *Nisei*, generally speaking, could be termed very good. The *Nisei* continued to respect the *Issei*. The *Kibei*, on the other hand, had difficulty with the *Nisei*. Of course, they, themselves, were *Nisei*, because they were born in the United States, went to Japan, got

[2] Issei is the term for Japanese immigrants originating from the Japanese language term for "first generation." In the American context, the term is generally understood to apply to those who migrated prior to the cessation of Japanese immigration to the U.S. under the dictates of the Immigration Act of 1924, the bulk arriving after 1885. The vast majority of Issei were thus middle-aged or older during World War II. "Issei," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Issei/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).
Nisei is the term for the children of Japanese immigrants, originating from the Japanese language term for "second generation." In the American context, the term is generally understood to apply specifically to the American-born—and thus U.S. citizen—children of Japanese immigrants who arrived prior to the cessation of Japanese immigration to the U.S. under the dictates of the Immigration Act of 1924. The bulk of Nisei were thus children or young adults during World War II. "Nisei" also implies being raised in the U.S. and speaking English as a first language, with a separate term—Kibei Nisei or just Kibei—applied to those who were born in the U.S. but mostly raised or educated in Japan. "Nisei," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nisei/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

most of their education in Japan, and then returned to the United States. But they were *Nisei* who were then called *Kibei* because of this cultural difference, in that they aligned themselves more with their stay in Japan than with their stay here in the United States, and their status as American citizens. This is a general characteristic description. But, generally speaking, that was about the way it was. There were many *Kibei* who were not like that. There were many *Kibei* who were very proud of the fact that they were American citizens. And so, it was a fringe *Kibei* that created the schism between themselves and the *Issei*, and between themselves and the *Nisei*. And they were the ones who tried to wrest the leadership role from most of the others. And they succeeded, primarily because they were fluent in both Japanese and English. So, the fringe *Kibei*, then, were really the crux of the troublemaking at Manzanar. The *Nisei*, as a whole, were indifferent. They were bitter to start with, but most of them were indifferent to their status, and basically went along with the rules and regulations that were in place, and followed the direction that the general administrative staff of the center placed on most of us, as a way of comporting ourselves in the camp. So, that kind of explains the differential with the rogue *Kibei* playing the divisive element in the relocation center, as far as I was able to perceive.

WP: Did they play a similar role within the Japanese American communities before everyone went to Manzanar? Or how do you think that those relationships changed from the communities beforehand, and then when people came to Manzanar?

PHK: I think the rogue *Kibei* – I call them the "rogue *Kibei*" – suddenly acquired the sense of power that they had, because of the situation in which they found themselves as being fluent in both languages. Before that, they were on the fringe. They were not as proficient

in English as the rest of the *Nisei*. And so, they were kind of in the background, but they were thrust into the leadership positions by the relocation center experience itself.

WP: Did you feel that the War Relocation Authority – do you think there was an overt attempt to Americanize the population at Manzanar in any way?

PHK: No, only this part about trying to infuse the element of democratic decision making, and a democratic way of working with the administration in disseminating the information, and rules and regulations, and so forth. So, there was no increased effort towards Americanization – not as far as I could see.

WP: If you had to generalize the viewpoint that you think the administration had at Manzanar, how would you describe that?

PHK: In what way?

WP: The viewpoint that they had on the evacuation, and their role at Manzanar, and what their job was relative to the Japanese Americans?

PHK: Well, I have an idea that the administration accepted their responsibility for operating the relocation center in as humane a way as possible. They tried to make the most of the experience, and did not try to exert undue influence in any negative fashion. The teachers and others who came into the relocation center – some came from Indian reservation experiences. And others were first-time teachers. And, basically, they were quite understanding of the situation, and did not try to impose any ideology onto the residents at all. And this could be said about the administrative staff too. They were reflecting what they thought the general objective of the federal government was.

WP: So, I want to talk a little bit about the Manzanar riot.[3] And I wanted to start with the atmosphere in camp before the riot happened. Were there any events or things that happened that perhaps were warning signals for what was to come?

PHK: Well, this group of people that I've referred to as rogue *Kibei* suddenly thought that members of the Japanese American Citizens League and others were providing negative information to the administration.[4] And they were, basically, strongly supporting the administration's efforts to conduct itself in a careful way, to avoid problems. The rogue *Kibei*, then, isolated a few of the people that they suspected as wrongdoers. They called them "dogs," and started to beat up on a couple of them.[5] And this, then, led to some problems, because most of the camp residents did not support that viewpoint at all. The rogue *Kibei*, then, fomented the kind of terrorism that leads to rowdyism. And this, then,

[3] A December 1942 incident at the Manzanar camp that resulted in the institution of martial law at the camp and that culminated with soldiers firing into a crowd of inmates, killing two and injuring many. The incident was triggered by the beating of Japanese American Citizens League leader Fred Tayama upon his return from a meeting in Salt Lake City and the arrest and detention of Harry Ueno for the beating. Coming one year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, sensationalist coverage of the event inflamed anti-Japanese sentiment outside the camps. The episode exposed deep divisions within the inmate population and with the camp administration. Brian Niiya. "Manzanar riot/uprising," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Manzanar%20riot/uprising/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

[4] The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), formed in 1929, became the most well-known, influential Japanese American organization in the United States, but its history is not without controversy. The decision of the wartime JACL's leadership to cooperate with the federal government in the mass exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II elicited harsh criticism from those who believed the organization should have done more to defend Japanese Americans' rights during the war. The JACL's wartime opposition of test cases and criticism of resisters and dissenters remains a painful source of division today. After the war, the JACL became active in turning back discriminatory legislation through the courts, lobbied for legislation that would allow greater rights for Japanese immigrants and subsequent generations of American citizens of various ethnic and racial backgrounds, and was a key player in the redress movement. Though still in existence today, the JACL has seen its influence and membership wane with the changing demographics and politics of the contemporary Asian American community. Cherstin Lyon. "Japanese American Citizens League," *Densho Encyclopedia*https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese%20American%20Citizens%20League/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

[5] *Inu* was most commonly used by many West Coast Japanese Americans to refer to “spies.” It literally translates as "dog." The label was specifically applied to individuals suspected of having informed on other Japanese Americans to federal government officials regarding their thoughts, words, and actions expressing support for Japan prior to and during their incarceration in the War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps. Brian Hayashi. "Informants / "inu"," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Informants%20/%20%22inu%22/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

gave some kind of a forewarning of the possibilities that might come off. So, that happened probably in maybe October-November of '42.

WP: Can you tell me about the events of the Manzanar riot, and your involvement in that, or your observation of that?

PHK: Well, most of my observations I wrote up in the material that was written up in the letters that I had written to Mrs. Nance. So, if you look at that, well, then you have a pretty good idea of what happened, insofar as my viewpoint went. So, I think that would be very clear, by reviewing that material.

WP: Could you explain that a little bit, just so we have that recorded on this tape? Maybe go through the day of the Manzanar riot, or the day before, and explain where you were, and what you observed happening in camp?

PHK: Well, you know, that's quite a bit. I think that makes it kind of longwinded, but –

WP: Yeah, we ask this question of a lot of different people, and most people that we talk to have very different perspectives on the situation, and very different stories about what happened that day and the days leading up to it. So, we just like to have as many details as possible from people who remember the riot, or were involved in some ways, of observing the riot, just for our records.

PHK: Then let me read what I had written. "December 6. Last night, at approximately 10:00 p.m., Fred Tayama" – T-A-Y-A-M-A, Tayama – "was beaten up.[6] He was taken to the hospital. It seems that he must have told the internal police. It seems as though he must have told the internal police about one of the people who attacked him. That person, a

[6] Businessman, Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) leader, beating victim at Manzanar. Fred Tayama (1905–66) was a JACL leader whose beating at Manzanar set off a chain of events leading to a riot/uprising at the camp. Brian Niiya. "Fred Tayama," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Fred%20Tayama/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

mess hall worker, was picked up and sent to a jail in Independence.[7] Apparently, the mess hall workers did not like the idea. Did not like the idea very much, so they began to make themselves heard. This afternoon, at one of the mess halls, a meeting was held. I did not attend it. According to what I have been able to gather, a group of people wanted that fellow released. They had a protest meeting. Little by little, more and more people gathered around. Finally, it was suggested that a group of people delegate themselves as a committee to see about obtaining a release. All of the people wanted to tag along. By that time, quite a crowd had gathered. *En masse*, the whole audience at the meeting began to go toward the administration buildings about a half a mile or so away. Someone reported this to the police, who apparently called the military police, because when the crowd of people finally got to its destination, it found some US soldiers, armed heavily, waiting for them. Evidently, this did not faze the people – men, women, and children. They stood around and began to denounce certain characters in Manzanar – the Japanese American characters, as traitors and dogs. Then they announced that they wanted the release of other people who were now in the Manzanar jail for a sentence of six months. In addition, certain center administrators were threatened. The crowd was ordered to disperse, but it refused. By this time, the crowd increased, and the soldiers numbered about 30.

According to my brother and others, the soldiers had rifles and revolvers. In addition, some had portable machine guns, and there was one gun emplacement set up. By this time, it was near supper time, so most of the people returned home. After supper, another meeting was held at the mess hall where the previous one took place. Then, the crowd was divided into two sections – one group went to the hospital and the other went to the

[7] This person was Harry Ueno. He was the Kibei leader of the mess hall workers union.

police station. There, they milled around, discussing, cussing, and occasionally yelling or shouting. Tonight, there was supposed to be an open forum discussion. Due to the tension of everyone in the center, it was called off. Shizuo Hori and I headed toward the administration housing. At about fifty feet from the houses, we heard someone say, 'Halt.' We walked on one more step. Then we saw a soldier. He said, 'Halt,' again. We stopped immediately. Then, he, presumably, cleared his rifle for action. We heard the bolt click. Then, he asked us what we wanted. Shizuo kept quiet. I said that we wanted to see Mrs. Adams, who was supposed to give a talk. And then stated our business. Prior to this, he tried calling the corporal of the guard, but he was unsuccessful. We were able to go to the house, and saw Dr. Carter. After that, we left the vicinity quickly," and so forth.

WP: Ok, thank you for reading that. It's great to have that on tape. And so, were you in the initial crowd that gathered? You said, "according to your brother and others" – were some of those accounts based on stories you'd heard from others?

PHK: Oh, wait, wait, wait, wait. I was not there. I stayed away from that. I do not particularly care for crowds. And, in fact, to this day, I do not go where crowds gather, because I know what can happen. Because I know that a crowd can easily be incited into a mob, and so, I refuse to join into any kind of a crowd action.

WP: So, where were you when all of this was going on?

PHK: Oh, I was at home.

WP: And your brother was in that crowd?

PHK: That's why I mentioned my brother was there. But I was not there. My father was not there.

WP: Were any of your other friends there?

PHK: Not to my knowledge.

WP: And were you fearful for your safety, at the time, or for your family or friends' safety?

PHK: My parents were, for my safety.

WP: Did they explain why they were fearful for your safety?

PHK: Yeah, I think we covered this last time.

WP: Yeah, I just want to go into a little bit more detail about this aspect of it.

PHK: Ok, what was the detail you wanted, that I didn't explain before?

WP: So, why were your parents fearful for your safety during the Manzanar riot?

PHK: Well, after the riot, they were fearful. During the riot, we weren't really aware of what was really going on, except from what my brother told us. But, at that time, we did not fear for me. It was after that.

WP: Can you tell me what the atmosphere in like in camp, after the riot had happened?

PHK: Well, basically, I think most people were wondering what was coming off, because we were not supposed to go back to work again. And, in fact, we might have been off work for about three weeks or so after the riot. Everything was shut down. So, there was an atmosphere of wondering what was going to come off.

WP: How was information exchanged during that point in time?

PHK: Once in a while, someone would write a notice and post it on the mess hall wall. At first, it was pretty obvious that some *Kibei* had written some stuff, because the English proficiency was not there. But, later on, it seemed as though some other people were doing the writing, because the language level had improved over time. But, basically, it was just short notes that were written on paper, and then nailed onto the bulletin board at the mess hall.

WP: Were the block managers involved in communicating this information to people in the blocks at all?

PHK: That, I don't know. I don't know what the block managers were doing at the time – probably nothing. Because I think all of that kind of activity ceased. People were not willing to expose themselves. As I said earlier, what resulted was an atmosphere of terrorism. And people were reluctant to do much of anything. And a notice went out that all work had to be stopped, and pay was stopped also, for maybe three weeks or so. In fact, many people lost their jobs and had to reapply for their jobs. The camouflage factory where my brother was foreman was closed down. So, some of these things were taking place because the administration felt that this would be like a lockdown, as we find in many United States prisons. When a riot situation occurs, there's a lockdown, and everything comes to a standstill. So it was in Manzanar, when this happened.

WP: And, in your opinion, what do you think the causes of the riot were?

PHK: In my opinion, it all started from the group that I called the rogue *Kibei* starting their campaign against Fred Tayama and others, whom they termed the informers and lower-class type people. And all of this was erroneous, but it was an attack against persons who were supporting the administrative efforts for the kind of camp life that was desired. And so, it was an expression of anti-Americanism by a small group of people. And, as usual, the mass of people was lethargic, and did not react in any ideological fashion one way or the other, which is unfortunate, but which is the way basic society usually is. They are influenced by mob action when it occurs, but absent that mob inciting, there is a basic lethargic – we find that true when we examine voting in the United States. We find out

that less than 50% of the people vote anyway, regardless of how they felt. And yet, maybe 80% will complain. So it was in the camp – same thing.

WP: And I know we talked about this a little bit already, and about you volunteering to join the military. Did you discuss your decision to volunteer for that with your family or with other friends?

PHK: No, it was a private matter. And the first time I volunteered, that was for the Japanese language, to be an interrogator-interpreter for the Military Intelligence Services. And, of course, I flunked the screening test on that. The second time I volunteered happened to be the same day as our mother's birthday. And so, when I came home and told her what I did, then, for the first time, I saw her cry, because she was that upset. So, obviously, I had not talked with either parent about my intention.

WP: What about with other friends that you had at Manzanar?

PHK: Oh, it was private. It was a private decision, and it was not something I needed to discuss with anybody. It was just the way I felt as a responsibility. There was no need to talk about it.

WP: And how did your father respond when he heard the news?

PHK: He just accepted it.

WP: And how did your family respond to the loyalty questionnaire?[8]

[8] In 1943, the War Department and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) joined forces to create a bureaucratic means of assessing the loyalty of Nikkei in the WRA concentration camps. All adults were asked to answer questions on a form that become known informally as the "loyalty questionnaire." Responses to this questionnaire were meant to aid the War Department in recruiting Nisei into an all-Nisei combat unit and the to assist the War Relocation Authority in authorizing others for relocation outside of the camps. The registration program provoked a wide range of resistance due to its provocative "loyalty" questions and built resentment among Issei and Nisei over their unconstitutional wartime treatment. Cherstin Lyon. "Loyalty questionnaire," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Loyalty%20questionnaire/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

PHK: Oh, both of my parents responded, "yes, yes," even though it was very clear that their response to both questions would mean that they would have no citizenship to Japan. They would lose their citizenship in Japan, and, of course, they could not become US citizens, even though they had wanted to, because of the fact that all persons of Japanese ancestry were denied the right of naturalization. And so, they could not be citizens. In fact, people of Japanese ancestry could not become US citizens until 1952, at which time both of my parents took Americanization lessons, and then went to the court, and became citizens.[9] They passed the oral examination there, and became US citizens in 1952. But until that time, they could not become citizens. And so, the two major questions that were asked in that stupid questionnaire that the government put out, they answered in positive fashion, despite recognition that, in so doing, they were left without a country. So, in effect, they gave up their Japanese citizenship, but could not attain US citizenship because of the law at that time. So, that meant that they both made a terribly significant decision, which, obviously, reflected their feelings about the United States, which is obviously a positive feeling. They did not denounce Japan. Instead, they affirmed their feelings about the United States.

WP: Was there discussion between your parents and within your immediate family about the loyalty questionnaire?

[9] A Cold War measure, the 1952 Immigration Act formally ended Asian exclusion as a feature of U.S. immigration policy, even as it strengthened the powers of the federal government to detain and prosecute suspected subversives. The Act allotted nominal immigration quotas to Japan and the rest of Asia, but the racial basis of these quotas limited their actual impact. It also eliminated race as a basis for naturalization, making Japanese and other foreign-born Asians eligible to become American citizens for the first time. Highly controversial, the McCarran-Walter Act had to overcome widespread opposition and a presidential veto before taking effect in June 1952. Jane Hong. "Immigration Act of 1952," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Immigration%20Act%20of%201952/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

PHK: I told them what the impact would be, in terms of their becoming stateless. But I also suggested that there really was no alternative available. I noted that I disagreed completely with the questions that were asked. The first question, of course, was to foreswear allegiance to the emperor of Japan. But the second one was willingness to serve in the armed forces. And I said that's stupid for people who were teenagers, and for those who were older like my parents. But I said that those were the stupid types of questions that were raised, and that we had to answer all of the questions on the questionnaire, whether we thought they were fair or not. And so, we had some discussion about it. So, they knew what they were doing. They knew exactly what they were doing.

WP: And within the camp as a whole, when the questionnaire was issued and everybody had to answer the loyalty questionnaire, what was the atmosphere like in camp?

PHK: I don't know. That's something that would be impossible for anyone to answer, because how can you judge enough to answer a question like that? That's not a very good question to ask, because that's a question that is impossible to answer.

WP: Do you remember your neighbors or friends, or maybe people within your block, being conflicted or talking about it? Did attitudes change after this was issued, that you were aware of?

PHK: No. We never discussed it. We thought the questionnaire itself was dumb, but then, we never really discussed it. Not much you could do about it.

WP: And what was your involvement with the National Student Relocation Council?[10]

[10] The National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) worked during World War II to help resettle inmates from the government's concentration camps to colleges in the Midwest and the East Coast. Under the sponsorship of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Council worked with students, their families, and the larger Japanese American community as well as a wide range of public and private organizations in ultimately helping more than 4,000 students resettle to pursue their higher education at more than 600 institutions. Allan Austin. "National Japanese American Student Relocation Council," *Densho*

PHK: Well, Helen Ely, who was with the American Friends Service Committee, helped considerably with the procedures, so that I was able to relocate.[11]

WP: And what was the process like? Did you have an interview with somebody who was a representative of that council?

PHK: No, the American Service Committee. I talked with Helen Ely, and she helped me with the idea of trying to find a job. Because there were two conditions. One was, before I could leave, I had to have a job offer. And, second, I had a place to stay. And so, she helped me with that. One offer I got, from Cleveland, was to work in a mortuary, and I'd be able to get a job in a mortuary and also stay in an apartment above the mortuary. I declined that offer. And my counteroffer was, I wanted to go to Chicago, primarily because Chicago was one of the two universities in the United States with the best schools for social work. One was Columbia University in New York, and the other was the University of Chicago. And I chose Chicago because I figured that it would be extremely easy for me to find a job there, which is true. And so, Helen Ely, then, made arrangements so that I would be able to stay in a hostel in Chicago, and she assured anyone, in writing, that I would be able to find a job in Chicago without any difficulty. And so, in that way, I was able to meet the requirements to relocate.

WP: And when did you become interested in social work?

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*Encyclopedia*https://encyclopedia.densho.org/National%20Japanese%20American%20Student%20Relocation%20Council/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

[11] Created in 1917 to aid conscientious objectors, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) had embarked on a more ambitious agenda by the mid-1920s that included attempts to ameliorate race relations in the U.S. After working with Japanese college students in the 1920s, the AFSC became actively involved with Japanese Americans during World War II. While its efforts to help extended across a wide range of activities, the AFSC focused on Japanese American resettlement, taking lead of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) and establishing hostels in several U.S. cities to help Japanese American resettlers adjust to life in their new communities. Allan Austin. "American Friends Service Committee," *Densho Encyclopedia*https://encyclopedia.densho.org/American%20Friends%20Service%20Committee/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

PHK: While I was in the relocation center, because my plan was to become an engineer, and I've already told you about having a job offer from the federal government which was then retracted. In the relocation center, I decided that what I wanted to do was to get into a position to be able to have influence in decision making relating to the welfare of people. So then, I decided to become a social worker. And, eventually, I was able to go to the University of Chicago, and enter their program. Eventually got my graduate degree from the School of Social Service Administration, majoring in social research and statistics, and administration classes. In that way, I decided that I would best be able to get into a position where I would be able to have some influence in decision making at the policy level.

WP: So, when did you leave Manzanar?

PHK: 1943, May.

WP: And do you remember your thoughts about leaving? Was it difficult? Or were you excited, or –

PHK: No, it's kind of hard to get me excited about anything. I just packed a suitcase, and carried a few books, as I explained earlier, and my typewriter. Got on the bus. Got on the train. Got to Chicago. And Mrs. Nance gave me a US savings bond valued $25. The federal government gave me a check for $25, and the one-way trip to Chicago.

WP: How did your parents feel about you leaving?

PHK: They accepted it. It was my decision. And they accepted the fact that I would go. They stayed behind, of course.

WP: And when did the rest of your family leave?

PHK: After I found my father and brother a job, after a couple of years, in Chicago. I had about five or six different jobs in Chicago, until I finally got a permanent position in a bookbindery, where I worked fulltime so I could earn enough money to pay for my tuition at the University of Chicago. And in order to continue paying for my tuition and living arrangements, I had to work fulltime while I went to the university. I had, of course, my engineering educational background – two years. But that was really not relatable to social work. And so, I took one year at University of Chicago, to get a bachelor of philosophy, which is equivalent, really, to associate in arts. And then, after that, was able to get the master's degree in social service administration, taking a lot of extra credit along the way so that, if I should later want to go on for a PhD, well then, I'd have a whole lot of extra credits that could then be applyable toward an advanced degree beyond the master's.

WP: And can you list the different jobs you had when you initially went to Chicago?

PHK: Yeah, I worked, first, in a small company that made Bible missals, Catholic missals – M-I-S-S-A-L-S.[12] Spent probably a week or so, and then gave that up. Got a job in a leather-glove making factory. Left that. Got a job at a place where a friend and I – Paul Saito and I – worked, where we had to put 200-pound bags of coffee beans onto skids. And we decided that that was just too much work for us, because we were only a little over five feet tall. And the 200-pound bags of coffee beans were kind of heavy. But we had to sling them up four high. The third high wasn't too bad, but the fourth high was

[12] The Roman Catholic Missal is a liturgical book outlining the instructions and prayers necessary for the celebration of the Catholic Mass throughout the year.

almost impossible for us to do. So, we probably spent probably three days on that job. Then, from there, we went into a leather glove factory, and both of us worked with the workers who were cutting out and sewing leather gloves – gloves to be used for laborers, and also gloves that were fine, doe-skin type gloves. And then, that got kind of boring. And so, then I went to work for Life and Time Bookbindery. And worked there for a number of months. Found a job, then, with the John F. Cuneo Bookbindery. And there, I found permanent work there, and was able to gain increases in pay every three to six months, so that I was able to make enough money to save for my tuition and living expenses. The Episcopal Church gave me a one-year scholarship, which was worth three quarters at the University of Chicago for my undergraduate degree work. And I returned that whole scholarship back to the bishop in Chicago, because all he was interested in was whether I was making grades, and not whether I was doing well, or how much I had to work, or anything else. The only thing that bishop was interested in was my grades. And so, I just said, well, he's not really interested in me. And so, I returned the whole one-year scholarship back to the Episcopal Church. So, those were the jobs I had. And it was at the Cuneo Press that I was able to find a job for my father and for my brother. And so, with the assurance that I got then, I let my parents know about it. And so, then, my father, mother, older brother, and sister were relocated to Chicago. And I had found an apartment for them in South Chicago.

WP: And what community did you live in, when you first relocated to Chicago?

PHK: I was supposed to stay at this hostel, and it turns out that the hostel was full. And so, Miss Ely, then, was able to arrange for me to live at the Meadville Theological School Seminary. That's a theological school seminary for the Unitarian Church on campus, at

the University of Chicago. So, my first stay in Chicago was at this seminary. And the seminary was interested in having more than seminary students living there, so that the seminary students will have working relationships and personal relationships with other men in non-seminary vocations. So, we had, in there, a person who was a physicist, another one who was going to business school. And I was going to go social services. At the time, I was not enrolled at the University of Chicago, so I was using the place as a base for my looking for work, and just staying on a temporary basis. So, my first home, therefore, was at the Meadville Theological School Seminary, at 57th and Woodlawn in Chicago.

WP: And what was the ethnic makeup of the people living there?

PHK: They were all white.

WP: Did you know other Japanese Americans in Chicago, when you moved?

PHK: Yeah, I knew a few. There was a Ken Horita [phonetic] who lived in a dormitory near the University of Chicago called the "GDI Dormitory" – all men, and it was a private group that just got together. And GDI was "God Damned Independent." And they lived there. And I think most of the men there were whites, and he just happened to be there somehow or other. Shizuo Hori, whom I knew from Los Angeles City College, left camp before I did. And he relocated to Chicago, and was living on West Jackson Street in Chicago, and attending the Illinois Institute of Engineering. And, later, I moved from Meadville to 1900 West Jackson Street, because Shiz found a room for me. So, my second living quarters, therefore, was in a hotel, where Shiz found a room for me. Other than that, there weren't too many others that I knew in Chicago, that is, of Japanese ancestry.

Later on, of course, I got to know a lot of people through the university. But I could not enter the university for a little over a year, because it turned out the University of Chicago was the site of the beginning of the atomic bomb, which was being developed at the Amos Alonzo Stagg Field at the University of Chicago. One of the people who lived in the Meadville Theological School was actually a scientist who pretended to be a grad student. He was a scientist who was actually working on the bomb procedures, with Professor Urey.[13] So, it was an interesting time that I lived over there.

WP: When did you find out that he had actually been working on that project?

PHK: When the project moved to Los Alamos, he then was leaving Meadville. And he told the rest of us that he was actually not a grad student, but that he had already had his PhD in physics and some other sciences, and was working with Professor Urey. And so, it was when he was saying his goodbyes that he told us what he actually was doing.

WP: What was your reaction when you found that out?

PHK: We were surprised, but happy that he was going to be going to New Mexico, because he was very much involved in the project itself.

WP: What was the academic community like at the University of Chicago?

PHK: Just like any other place where you go to school – no different.

WP: So, was it a positive experience for you, going to school there?

PHK: Yes, yes, I am very glad that I went there. It was not easy, but it was a good experience. The major problem was, I had to work throughout my whole period, and because of the fact that my previous years' earnings were more than the level that would qualify me for

[13] Harold C. Urey was a physical chemist who won the Nobel Prize for the discovery of deuterium, served as Director of War Research for Columbia University's Atomic Bomb Project, then joined the University of Chicago's Institute for Nuclear Studies.

any kind of scholarship or grant program, the University of Chicago could give me no help with my expenses. So, I had to pay for all tuition and all my living costs by myself. Of course, as I said earlier, our family was poor to start with, so they were unable to help me out with my educational costs.

WP: And what did your family do, as far as work, when they came to Chicago?

PHK: Well, as I said, my father and brother worked at Cuneo Press, because I got them the jobs which enabled them to leave the relocation center. My mother found a job in a shirt factory in Chicago. My sister was going to a junior college.

WP: Do you know which junior college?

PHK: I don't know. I think it was called Wright, but I don't really know.

WP: And did you or anyone in your family, or other Japanese Americans you knew in Chicago – did you ever experience any prejudice?

PHK: Not really, not really. I was mistaken as being a Native American a couple of times by people, but did not experience any problems.

WP: And when did you meet your wife? Was that in Chicago?

PHK: Yeah, in Chicago. She was a case worker at the Cook County department, and I just met her at –

AK: I don't want any intrusion into my life.

PHK: Yeah, well, my wife doesn't particularly want me to talk about her. So, I met her in Chicago.

WP: And how long did you stay in Chicago?

PHK: Until 1950.

WP: And where did you go to after that?

PHK: I found a job in Springfield, Illinois.

WP: And what was your job there?

PHK: You'll find all that in that sheet that I sent you.

WP: And then, where did you relocate to after Springfield?

PHK: Well, it's on there. I went from Springfield, Illinois, to Madison, Wisconsin.

WP: And do you want to share any of your career highlights? It sounds like you've had a really fascinating career. Is there anything you want to share or talk about?

PHK: No, not particularly. It's all written up in that modified *vitae* that I sent you. If you want to, you could read that into the record.

WP: And did you remain in contact with people from Manzanar after you left? Were there specific people that you communicated with more than others?

PHK: No, not really. I lost contact with them.

WP: And were you involved in the redress movement at all?[14]

PHK: Yes.

WP: Can you tell me about that?

PHK: As Madison representative of the Wisconsin chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, I was heavily involved in the redress action, in terms of communicating with local state legislative representatives – wrote letters to the president – Reagan and his wife – talked to groups that were interested in what was happening – and received a joint

[14] The Redress Movement refers to efforts to obtain the restitution of civil rights, an apology, and/or monetary compensation from the U.S. government during the six decades that followed the World War II mass removal and confinement of Japanese Americans. Early campaigns emphasized the violation of constitutional rights, lost property, and the repeal of anti-Japanese legislation. 1960s activists linked the wartime detention camps to contemporary racist and colonial policies. In the late 1970s three organizations pursued redress in court and in Congress, culminating in the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, providing a national apology and individual payments of $20,000 to surviving detainees. Alice Yang. "Redress movement," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Redress%20movement/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

award from the Wisconsin ACLU for efforts on behalf of the redress movement. I did not support Bill Hohri with the direction that he went.[15]

WP: And what was that?

PHK: Well, his was different from the redress movement.

WP: Could you explain that a little bit for me?

PHK: No, not really, because it really wasn't too much of a thing. I just was – leave that, leave that, leave that.

AK: You didn't do it?

PHK: I didn't do it. Just leave it.

AK: I thought –

PHK: I told you, I didn't do it yet.

AK: Oh, ok. Just that one I took, I'll bring back.

PHK: Bring it back, yeah.

AK: All right.

PHK: I was not impressed with what Bill Hori was doing, and so, I wasn't really following what he was doing. But I do know that it was in contrast to the direction the Japanese American Citizens League was taking.

WP: And what was your response when you heard that official apology was made, and that the $20,000 check was sent?

[15] Writer, civil rights activist and lead plaintiff in the National Council for Japanese American Redress (NCJAR) class action lawsuit. William Hohri (1927–2010) spearheaded the NCJAR class action lawsuit, which sued the U.S. government for $27 billion for injuries suffered as a result of the exclusion and imprisonment of Japanese Americans in U.S. concentration camps during World War II. The long court battle began on March 16, 1983, and ultimately was disallowed on technical grounds on Oct. 31, 1988, two months after the *Civil Liberties Act of 1988* was signed. Martha Nakagawa. "William Hohri," *Densho Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.densho.org/William%20Hohri/ (accessed Feb 18 2019).

PHK: Well, my wife and I appreciated the response that Bush had written. But we felt that the $40,000 that we got should not be used by us. And so, we contributed the whole $40,000 to a variety of groups that we thought should be recognized for what they did during the evacuation period. So, we contributed all that money completely to the organizations.

WP: Did you and your parents or siblings talk about your experiences at Manzanar after the fact, or later in life?

PHK: No, no, not a bit. They're just part of history, that's all. And it wasn't that important to us. It was just something that happened, and that was it.

WP: And have you talked about your experiences at Manzanar with others?

PHK: Only when I've been asked to give presentations. But other than that, I don't talk about it.

WP: What kinds of presentations have you been involved in?

PHK: I thought I told you about those?

WP: Yeah, I watched the interview that you did in Madison that was just recently done. Have you done any other formal presentations with schools or other organizations?

PHK: Yeah, I've talked with classes at the University of Wisconsin, Madison – high school classes – middle school classes – social groups – the Kiwanis and Optimists – church groups – Lutheran churches as well as United Church of Christ – almost any group that asks me to give a talk, I've gone and given to it. So, I probably do two or three or four in a year's time.

WP: And have you been involved in any Manzanar related reunions or pilgrimages of any kind?

PHK: No, because I've never gone to any of those. Until very recently, I used to get invited to the Manzanar High School Reunions, but then I've never gone to any of them.

WP: And looking back at your camp experiences, how do you think those experiences shaped the rest of your life?

PHK: Well, I think it's pretty obvious what happened. I've already explained that I changed from engineering to social work, and that made a big difference. But that was it.

WP: Any other ways?

PHK: No.

WP: If someone were to listen to this interview 100 years from now, is there anything you'd want them to know or remember about your experiences throughout your life?

PHK: No, it wouldn't make any difference to me.

WP: Is there anything else that you want to share, to have on your recording, or through your oral history?

PHK: No, I think not. We now have three adult children, and five grandchildren. Three of the five grandchildren are college graduates. The fourth is a senior in college, and the youngest is a junior in high school. Truth is – a good family.

WP: And do they all live near you, in the Midwest?

PHK: No, my son, his wife, and their daughter live in Madison. But the others live in Northern Wisconsin and in San Jose.

WP: Ok, great. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

PHK: No, I think not. I think that about covers everything.

WP: Ok. Well, I just want to thank you very much on behalf of the park service for taking so much time to speak with me and share your story. And, yeah, thank you very much.

PHK: Ok. And I'll send you this –

[End of audio]